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ABSTRACT

This collection of papers addresses the complex problem of humanistic literacy, stressing techniques for creating a relationship between our inherited knowledge and the abilities to read intelligently and write clearly. After an introduction on the issue of humanistic literacy and the preparation of this publication, the three papers in Section I suggest ways in which remediation and humanistic education can be combined. The first essay, "Homer's 'Odyssey' and Humanistic Education: Towards a Theory of the Humanities," by Clay A. Boland, Jr., discusses the "Odyssey" as a source of descriptive definitions of humanism, humanist, and humanistic education. "The American Musical: A Value-Reflecting Ritual," by Wayne H. Freeman, explores the social values and cultural changes reflected in this art form. In "Community Colleges and Literacy," Donald B. Epstein traces the history of literacy training and reviews the Guided Studies Program at Clackamas Community College (OR) which links the humanities with the life experiences of nontraditional students. The papers in Section II describe remedial programs with a humanistic emphasis. Margaret Byrd Boegeman, in "Autobiography in English Composition," describes the use of autobiographical writing in developing language skills and promoting self-awareness and self-confidence. "Learning to Write Sentence by Sentence: A Modular Approach to English Composition," by Peter L. Sharkey, examines the College of Marin's (CA) course, which emphasizes thesis, tone, and point of view. (KL)

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HUMANISTIC LITERACY AND THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENT

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HUMANISTIC LITERACY AND THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENT:

A PREFACE

GRACE E. GRANT

The current crisis in literacy is not a new problem; concern about standards for language proficiency have existed since before the turn of the century.[1] Present conditions, however, have created a society which wishes that literacy, long regarded both as an instrument for social mobility and as an opportunity for irrepressible pleasure, were more closely tied to economic success. This questioning of the significance of humanistic literacy is of grave concern to those in higher education today. Diverse experts alternately promote literacy and remediation as interactive skills for human beings, as basic language skills for reading and writing, and as punishing devices for students perceived as "disadvantaged." For some, the call for standards implies the imposition of standardization. The issue is charged with conflicting motives, morals, and politics. Recognition of the dual function for literacy training, toward practical and humanistic ends, has produced fiercely divided loyalties rather than efforts to reconcile their complementary nature.

With this in mind, one might question whether contemporary methods of instruction in literary training are in harmony with the social demands of a mass industrial community. The authors of this collection suggest that they are not. Present methods of instruction are in large part remnants of an adaptation to a state that has long ago passed away. The contributors point out that while much attention has been given to the ability of students to read intelligently and to write clearly and correctly, little has been done to connect their ability to receive profitable instruction and enlightenment from literature, history, philosophy and the arts. Since the two exist in a synergistic rather than dichotomous relation, without one, the other is hardly worth the trouble. From the humanist viewpoint, the two are inextricable and there is merit in recalling to literary training the subject matter of these humanistic studies.

Therefore, this collection of papers addresses the complex problem of humanistic literacy--stressing the techniques for creating a relationship between the riches and values of our inherited knowledge and the more specific abilities to read intelligently and to write clearly. The authors hope to promote a dialogue between those who advocate humanistic literacy and those who advocate special remedial programs outside the traditional humanistic curriculum.

From their scholarly experience as five community college teachers in an on-going multi-disciplinary seminar, the authors offer innovative approaches to humanistic literacy in the teaching of the humanities. Although they came to the Humanities Faculty Development Program at Claremont Graduate School primarily to pursue individual research and pedagogical projects which were tangential to literacy, it soon became evident that the success of each project assumed a level of verbal competency in students which could no longer be taken for granted. This unifying concern with the significance of the humanities in a mass consumer society and with the eroding trust in literary training for all students is founded on a common belief that writing affects what makes us truly human and is the central core of all of the humanities. Unless language belongs personally and privately to students, communication is ineffective. The authors felt, in fact, that unless particular attention was given to this pressing problem at once, humanistic education, as a cultural ideal, was sure to flounder and possibly disappear.

They began to consider how to teach skills without sacrificing a high level of discourse about cultural and personal goals. To release the native imagery, students must be connected with the sources of their language. Neither the languages of television nor the tinkering with rules of grammar do more than deal superficially with the problem. The humanities, however, can be a means to that source through an understanding of our inherited historical and cultural traditions.

The invocation of the seminar to redress this crisis, cultural and academic, has been so powerful that each of the research projects was modified substantially to impart to community college faculty and administrators concrete programs to begin to rectify humanistic literacy. The authors wish to restore the synthesis of literary training and humanistic studies and to redirect remediation to serve the personal and cultural values of the community.

Humanistic literacy, then, is the common concern of the papers presented in this collection.

NOTES

[1] See for example, Adam Sherman Hill's *Principles of Rhetoric and Their Application* (1878), Henry Pearson's *Freshman Composition* (1897) and Edwin Wooley's *Handbook of Composition* (1907); more recently P.J. Crobett's *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student* (1965) and Ross Winterowd's *The Contemporary Writer: A Practical Rhetoric* (1975), have addressed the same issue.

THE HUMANITIES

SECTION I

THE HUMANITIES AND LITERACY

The three papers in this section present the riches and values of our inherited knowledge and the more specific abilities to read carefully and to write clearly. They suggest that attention to the ability of students to read intelligently and to write clearly and correctly is only a superficial treatment of a complex issue. These efforts have not sought the sources of language in the inherited cultural values of literature, history, philosophy, and the arts. Unless students can tap these sources to give language personal meaning, literary training is meaningless. Literary training and humanistic studies are conceptually complementary; together they lead to a more complete understanding of that which makes us human.

Clay Boland draws from the Odyssey a theory of humanistic education; this paradigm of humanistic values is designed to help community college students to learn inherited cultural values, awareness, and perception to develop study skills, self-knowledge and self-potential.

Wayne Freeman illustrates how the American musical transmits and reinforces cultural literacy and values and demonstrates its great potential for furthering the understanding of our cultural tradition.

Donald B. Epstein shows how guided studies into humanistic literacy by way of historical perception increases the ability to understand cultural values, especially by visiting local historical sites, buildings, and museums. He traces the historical dichotomy between the practical and the humanistic in literacy; his Guided Studies Program is designed to build skills and humanistic understandings in non-traditional students.

It is the notion of the mutual collaboration of literary training and humanistic studies which pervades these papers. Section I suggests ways in which this interplay might happen in literature, music, and history.

HOMER'S *ODYSSEY* AND HUMANISTIC EDUCATION: TOWARDS A THEORY OF THE HUMANITIES

CLAY A. BOLAND, JR.

> The whole race through its artists sets
> down the models of its aspirations.[1]

I

The present state of humanistic education is one of chaos. Very few scholars or teachers seem to know what they are doing or why they are doing it. Non-humanistic methodologies, theories, and fads abound, their devotees waving various humanistic banners. Anti-humanistic life-styles, attitudes, and goals proliferate among humanist teachers. Attacks upon the humanities have come from humanists themselves as well as from those outside the discipline. Representative critics attack its purpose, its validity, and its vitality.

> The characteristically modern approach[es] to scholarship and training...are inherently antithetical to the aims of humanism, and when we act on them we undermine the claims of the humanities to centrality in the education of men.[2]

And there are, of course, equally pointed and difficult to gainsay criticisms from administrators, students, parents, taxpayers, and others outside the innersanctum of the modern humanities. These criticisms are eloquently expressed by decreasing interest and increasing withdrawal of financial support.

Clearly, the essence of humanistic education has been adulterated by some, misplaced by others, and diluted by many. Fortunately, however, there are many texts that preserve this essence. Perhaps the most germane in a "research" for quintessential humanistic education is Homer's Odyssey. Despite the contributions of the last twenty-seven hundred years, this long revered Ur-humanist text is still the best source of working and much-needed prescriptive definitions for humanism, humanist, humanities, and their relation to humanistic education. And what is its essence? Its essence is that it encourages us to be, in James Dickey's phrase, "better than we are."[3]

II

The basic essence, function, or fascination of these four interrelated concepts is an article of faith: faith in the possibility that all who avail themselves of a humanistic education can be better human beings. This faith remained strong and dominant for many centuries. Humanitas meant to the Romans, who inherited the legacy of Homer and the Greeks, both the cultivation of intellect and the cultivation of moral responsibility:[4]

refinement, then, of both mind and character. This faith was retained in the Renaissance discovery of the old world and the literature of Greece and Rome and was still central in the seventeenth century. Now it is weak and dormant. Perhaps it is time to recapture and restore it to its original centrality.

The choice of Homer as our guide in this time of chaos can hardly be called arbitrary. He holds the same position in the humanist tradition (which, it should be emphasized, is not a religious tradition but rather one that treats man as man on his own without supernatural aid or belief) as Moses does in the Hebraic tradition. He is the source of the tradition's essential ideas. Jaeger, in a chapter entitled "Homer the Educator," tells us: "Homer...is something much more than a figure in the parade of literary history. He is the first and greatest creator and shaper of Greek life and the Greek character."[5] Hadas takes the claim one step further: "if it is true...that the Greeks moulded the character of Europe, then Homer may be Europe's most influential teacher, for it was Homer that moulded the Greeks."[6]

Although Homer's other great epic poem, the Iliad, and Hesiod's The Works and Days were of equal popularity and educational importance to the Odyssey,[7] I find that all that is essential and best in relation to humanistic education can be found in this ur-humanist text. Humanism, humanists, humanities, and humanistic education are related; they all embody a common core of goals that bind these categories and labels together. It is precisely because I believe that this core exists and needs to be revisioned that I have returned to an original source to examine its essence.

Homer's Odyssey suggests the following definitions. In general, humanism can be defined as an attitude that man is independent of any divine realm and therefore responsible for himself and his society, an attitude that man, despite his bestial nature and the indifference of fate, is capable of and responsible for trying to achieve self-discipline, brotherly love, open-mindedness, ethical behavior, dignity, grace, virtue, and excellence. The humanist, then, is a model for others in his life-style, attitudes, and goals, in his speech, writing, reading, interests, and teaching of humanistic virtues. The humanities are the affective aspects of those pursuits, studies, and arts that encourage and foster the best in man: namely, self-discipline, brotherly love, open-mindedness, ethical behavior, dignity, grace, virtue, and excellence. Humanistic education, being the sum total of all of these, is the humanities taught by a humanist in a spirit of humanism.

III

Human nature is equally capable of rational and irrational behavior: Kingsley Martin has well expressed man's tendency to favor the animal within him:

> Men are more nationalistic, violent and stupid than they thought they were. We control the earth and the air, but not the tiger, the ape and the donkey.[9]

In other words, man also holds potential for lack of self-discipline, brotherly hate, closed-mindedness, unethical behavior, undignified action, disgrace, vice, and shoddiness when he surrenders to his bestial nature, his desire to avoid rationality, and his unwillingness to listen to his conscience. Erich Fromm, in The Heart of Man: Its Genius for Good and Evil, theorizes that because of these ever-present contrary potentialities, each human choice represents either a regression or progression: regression to decay or barbarism through levels of necrophilia, narcissism, incestuous symbiosis, and mother fixation; or progression to growth or humanism through levels of biophilia, love for neighbor, stranger, and nature, and independence and freedom.[10]

One can see man as "nothing but the product of cultural patterns that mold him"[11] or as having freedom of choice within limited perimeters to choose noble or ignoble alternatives.[12] In either case, humanistic education can be either a positive or a negative force and, if Fromm's theory is valid, represent an aid to regression or progression. Neutrality is impossible.

Jung's ideas offer both a support and a threat to this Homeric, Frommian, humanistic thesis. He suggests that man's dark side should not discourage us from believing in his bright side:

> Psychology has profited greatly from Freud's pioneering work; it has learned that human nature has also a black side and that not man alone possesses this side, but his works, his institutions, and his convictions as well....Our mistake would lie in supposing that what is radiant no longer exists because it has been explained from the shadow side.[13]

However, he also undercuts the role of reason in man's decision. "The great decisions of human life have as a rule far more to do with the instincts and other mysterious unconscious factors than the conscious will and well-meaning reasonableness."[14] This perhaps indicates that modern humanists should abandon their "rational heresy" that reason alone can save man[15] and try to learn more about psychological man. A sound theory of humanistic education must start not only with the source of humanism in man's writing but also in man' nature.

Psychology, indeed, may be the most potentially humanistic endeavor in modern academe. As humanists we should welcome and draw on its important contributions--especially those of Maslow and Rogers -- to the study of humans: what they are, what they can be, and the hidden forces behind their language, art, and social structures. Kirkendall sees this as the humanists' responsibility:

"It is only through a knowledge of man, his strengths and weaknesses, his capacities and potentialities, his ability to challenge the best that is within him, that we can hope for a better world."[16] The Homeric model can be pretested in light of some twentieth century theories of man' nature. Fromm's view is supportive. Jung's second statement makes us aware that the Homeric, humanist task is more heroic than we believed.

Humanistic education, then, should be an activity in which we, as teachers, educate (literally, lead out from); our responsibility is to encourage (literally, instill courage in) fellow humans to realize the best of their human potential through our attitudes, lives, and our selections of materials and methodologies. Our task is to develop potential and to instill the courage needed to realize the potential to be more fully human.

IV

Conceptually, the epic is the triumph of cosmos over chaos, of man's ability to act in a civilized manner over man's ability to act in a bestial manner, and of human purpose over nature's indifference. As always, man defines his humanity and asserts the fact that he "is human only by understanding and shaping reality, both his world and himself, according to meanings and values."[17]

The *Odyssey*, therefore, represents the victory of the forces of light and life (the forces of humanism) over the forces of darkness and death (the forces of barbarism). Homer's choice of images of light in connection with Odysseus and his cause upon his return to his "darkened" home emphasize this victory.[18]

Throughout the epic we are offered models of civilized cosmos in the societal order and harmony in various palaces. The courts of Alkinoos and Nestor serve as exemplars of cosmos in which men cherish and maintain just order, pleasing speech, good manners, hospitality, and true human kindness. They are in direct contrast to the suitors anarchy, vulgarity, uncouth behavior, inhospitality, and lack of humane feeling that predominate in Odysseus' palace at Ithaca. The final "house cleaning" foreshadowed in every part of the work is a necessary end to chaos.

The text clearly suggests that the results of wrongdoing are the death of man's life-sustaining and hard-earned civilization. Clarke, in discussing the courteous nature of the poem (its concern with hospitality, niceties, manners, and proprieties), indicates that such a viewpoint is not too extreme:

> [The suitors] are without courtesy, regard, tact, or restraint...[and] would [not only] utterly de-civilize Ithaca...[but also] undermine the whole facade of heroic manners....This is a society...in which manners are important because they buttress conduct and give life style,

> grace, and ease; in a formalized society they can heavily influence men's lives by providing them with traditional and approved patterns of action. All of this the barbarism of the Suitors would despoil....[In] their total impoliteness the Suitors truly represent the forces of death, since by their loutishness and their squandering they would destroy the kind of civilized life that the Odyssey celebrates.[19]

In contrast to the kingdoms of light, this kingdom of darkness is peopled with beings who have given up their birthright for a barbaric pottage of favor-seeking, sloth, licentiousness, drunkedness, unearned living and undeserved authority. In doing so, they are dead to humanity and its values.

The triumph of cosmos over chaos is centrally presented not only in man's struggle against that which in himself and within others can destroy civilization; it is also represented in man's confrontation with loneliness and helplessness in an indifferent universe -- in a world "in many of its aspects...alien and even hostile to human aspiration."[20] Although it is true that Odysseus is shown to be in contact with divine grace through the goddess Athena, most modern readers tend to interpret this as symbolic of his cleverness, intuition, and intelligence. After all, Odysseus and Athena are amazingly similar in trait and attitude. As Athena herself admits: "Two of a kind we are/ contrivers, both."[21] Post sees the gods in the Odyssey simply as "masks for luck or skill or character...[who] accomplish only what would happen anyway."[22] And Lattimore is of the opinion that "Homer's gods are really people, and Homer is basically anti-theological."[23]

There is sufficient evidence, then, that man is on his own in the Homeric world and that divine intervention in that world is only symbolic. And even if one were to accept Athena as an actual divine being, she does not aid Odysseus in facing personal loneliness and cruel indifference. During the long journey home from Troy he is buffeted by sea and wind (symbolized by Poseidon wishing and enacting revenge) from place to place, shipwrecked, isolated (with or without his men),[24] detained, and delayed. Yet the triumph is that he does persist and overcomes all obstacles to "reach home." His persistence is what Victor Frankl would call his "will to meaning,"[25] his desire to achieve excellence and to return to his wife and home. Human purpose sustains him in the face of overwhelming odds. In so doing, he encourages us "to endure...perils and to assert the values of human life, and to maintain these values, however fragile, in the face of a hostile universe."[26]

Ironically, the reader is led, as Kazantzakis projected,[27] to see the journey with all its hardships, loneliness, and viscissitudes as more challenging, exciting, worthwhile, and ennobling than reaching and being home. The striving and the struggle are their own rewards. In psychological terms, this "becoming" is "the unfinished structure that has...dynamic power."[28] Humanism itself has been defined as a dynamic odyssean journey and its vicissitudes: "humanism is a philosophy of change, preparing one for change, encouraging the interested acceptances of changes. It asserts for all approaches the value of the human adventure."[29]

Another quintessential element which the Odyssey presents is a model for readers to emulate--heroic, noble, courteous, and intelligent Odysseus. His character asks and inspires readers to face life heroically, nobly, courteously, and intelligently. Odysseus, in humanistic educational terms, is the teacher who conveys his subject by living it. "A civilized and humanized man is the only ostensive definition of the humanities--the evidence of the text we study, a living example of the meaning and value of what he teaches."[30] Both the teacher and Odysseus can be such a text-person; by learning experientially as well as conventionally, they augment their humanity and increase their credibility with an understanding of their fellow men.

The adventure scheme is also central to its effect; the broad scope of its material prompts the reader to pursue a larger, more demanding adventure in his own internal and external life. The wide horizons it encourages is the desire to live more fully and to be and to seek. One of the main tasks of the humanistic educator is to enkindle and maintain this interest. As earlier humanists "opened minds and widened seas,"[31] he preserves and presents adventures of the human mind and spirit in a way that inspires emulation. It is the broadening of humane understanding that helps us to see meaning and value in self-discipline, brotherly love, open-mindedness, ethical behavior, dignity, grace, virtue, and excellence.

Since a great work employs a style and form artistically appropriate to its content, the verbal and structural medium of the Odyssey are on a level with the excellence that the work encourages and is therefore, an important part of the epic's message and appeal. They ask the reader to directly experience the nobility, sensitivity, and intelligence of which man is capable. Jaeger gives an excellent analysis of the great power which poetry in particular and art in general possess to educate us humanistically:

> Poetry can educate only when it expresses all the aesthetic and moral potentialities of mankind. But the relationship of the aesthetic and the moral element in poetry is not merely that of essential form and more or less accidental material. The educational content and the artistic form of a work of art affect each other reciprocally, and in fact spring from the same root....The aesthetic effect of style, structure, and form in every sense is conditioned and interpenetrated by its intellectual and spiritual content....Poetry cannot be really educative unless it is rooted in the depths of the human soul, unless it embodies a moral belief, a high ardour of the spirit, a broad and compelling ideal of humanity.

> It is usually through artistic expression that the highest values acquire permanent significance and the force which moves mankind. Art has a limitless power of converting the human soul -- a power which the Greeks called psychagogia. For art alone possesses the two essentials of educational influence -- universal significance and immediate appeal. By uniting these two methods of influencing the mind, it surpasses both philosophical thought and actual life.... Thus, poetry has the advantage over both the universal teachings of abstract reason and the accidental events of individual experience. It is more philosophical than life..., but it is also, because of its concentrated spiritual actuality, more lifelike than philosophy.[32]

The parallel to speech and writing in humanistic education is clearly this: the teacher, not only through his selection of texts but also through his own verbal and structural choices in spoken and written discourse, should set an inspiring example that is indicative of man's best use of language. He should also directly aid and foster the development of students' verbal and compositional skills. Most emphatically, this is not a task independent of any humanistic endeavor but is the heart of all humanism.

V

This text provides pertinent material for humanistic education's broadest subject areas: man's responsibility to himself, his family, and his society; his existence in the midst of an impersonal and therefore "indifferent" nature; and his attitude to the vagaries and abritrariness of fate. The ideal common to all of these areas of life is the need for self-discipline. Robert Fitzgerald sees this "self-mastery" as the whole point of the Odyssey.[33] William Stanford cites this attribute and the virtue of moderation as central to the Odyssey: "In so far as Homer has any message...it comes to this: only by Ulyssean self-control and moderation can man achieve victory in life."[34] Man is responsible for using this self-discipline in all aspects of his life: to achieve dignity, virtue, and excellence for himself; in loyalty to his family; for grace, ethical behavior, and brotherly love in his society; and in persevering an ordered existence in the midst of a threatening nature and despite the capriciousness of fate. In all cases he must exercise a Promethean foresight and insight to survive the potential perverseness of self, others, nature, and fate.

For some, Odysseus is a scamp, a rogue, and a liar. Certainly, he is deceptive, cunning and clever. Although these qualities make him less perfect (and more believeable), this aspect of his behavior grows from the potential perverseness of self and is a defensive mechanism against similar perverseness in others. Certainly, the world demands of us caution and reality-orientation, and Odysseus have both in excessive amounts.

Yet it is possible to admire Odysseus's deceptions. These behaviors spring from "Promethean foresight and insight": the ability to see ahead and to analyze is combined with a receptive mind readily adaptable to handling the unexpected and capable of interpreting it objectively. Odysseus' intellectual ability to grasp and deal with each new situation is admirable. His modus operandi, however, in handling most situations may seem to the modern reader dishonest.

Whatever one's opinion of this dignified rogue as model man, as humanistic educators our concern is to endow our students with an odyssean grasp of reality and an ability to think analytically and objectively.

VI

Yet a humanistic education that devotes itself only to student's intellectual capacities does only a partial job. The ideal in Homeric society is the integration of the total person and the realization of the best of individual capabilities. It is "a deep and intimate concern with the full flowering of human potential and personality which can only be the experience of real individuals."[35]

In the Homeric world the individual is of extreme importance. In the Odyssey we can see that his society has created "a climate in which the attainment of acknowledged excellence is a normal ambition of the individual,"[36] a climate which promotes "the insistence upon recognition of individual worth."[37] It is an individual's responsibility, therefore, to realize the best that is within him. In philosophical terms, he must practice "eudamonism,... the ethical doctrine that each person is obliged to know and to live in the truth of his daimon, thereby progressively actualizing an excellence that is his innately and potentially."[38] In psychological terms, he must try to achieve "self-actualization," which Maslow defines as "the full use and exploitation of talents, capacities, potentialities."[39]

To do this, Odysseus must be willing to strive heroically for excellence (arête) and reputation (kleos). It would be safe to say that unless he is willing to persevere nobly in all situations the individual is automatically disqualified from an honorable place in the Homeric world. Further, since "striving heroically" is implicitly equated to "living fully," it is the essential element separating the full life from an empty and meaningless existence. In a similar manner Frankl proposes, as an antidote to the existential vacuum in inner emptiness, that "What man actually needs is not a tension-less state but rather the striving and struggling for some goal worthy of him."[40]

Thus excellence in the Homeric world is to be sought in language, manners, patience, self-control, insight, and foresight, although all are to be tempered by human moderation. This is what Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson refers to as the Greek emphasis on "self-development."[41] The reputation that one gains through action and through self-acclaim and eventually the praise of others is one's true immortality; although based on an egotistical drive, in time it becomes altruistic by supplying one's fellow men with a model of aspiration "who by doing or suffering significantly...has enriched the lives of all."[42]

Odysseus is this model of excellence. In speech, he is the story-teller and poet without peer, and as one able to even "clothe" himself with elegant verbiage when naked before the Princess Nausikaa. He is a model of manners in the court of Nausikaa's father, Alkinoos, and elsewhere. He is a model of physical excellence in sport in the games with the Phoenicians. He is a model of knowledge of the arts of war and bravery in their practice in his slaying of the suitors. He is a model of patience in bearing the long travail of his extended return to Ithaca. He is a model of self-control in almost everything he does but especially in bearing the outrageous treatment of the suitors until the opportune moment for retribution. And he is a model of insight and foresight in all his adventures, particularly in his reading of human motivation and the quick analysis of the problems presented by new situations. Odysseus thus fulfills what Kazantzakis, paraphrasing Julian Huxley, refers to as "man's most sacred duty...to promote the maximum fulfillment of the [cultural] evolutionary process on the earth....This includes the fullest realization of his inherent possibilities."[43]

As the Homeric text implies, an important component of humanistic education is the achievement of a personal excellence based on self-discipline, dignity, and virtue. Dignity results from what Frankl labels "the consciousness of one's inner value,"[44] and virtue reflects and asserts one's ability to achieve excellence. Actually, one can see that all four terms--excellence, self-control, dignity and virtue--are interrelated and almost interchangeable; all incorporate the ideal expression of human life. Thus, humanistic educators need to recognize and foster personal excellence.

Man's society in the Odyssey is a community of mutual protection from nature and invaders and of individual excellence in human nature; it also demands self-discipline from its members. In order that society may function to encourage the best in man, each member must contribute grace and manners, ethical behavior, and brotherly love. Where this self-discipline exists, the society presented (such as that of Scherie, Pylos, or Sparta) excells. But where this self-discipline is lacking, such as in the anti-society created by the suitors at Ithaca, it leads man to realize his worst potentialities.

Humanism encourages grace, ethical behavior, and brotherly love in our societal interactions; it is extremely important that humanists not only foster these behaviors in their students, but that as educators they practice what they profess. As all of this essay and the Odyssey implies, what one practices is what one really professes. It may be more important than what one professes.

VII

Man once more must call on self-discipline to maintain perseverance and an ordered existence in the midst of a threatening nature and an increasingly problematic future. The self-discipline of Odysseus in the face of all his many ordeals offers rich evidence of this. But there is more to his perserverance. He persists through all not only by "luck or skill of character,"[45] but also because he has a keen intellectual curiosity and a strong sustaining vision--that of returning home--that gives him the strength to go on.

The humanist intellectual curiosity is usually praised. But this sustaining vision (of man improving himself and thereby his society) has often been chided and criticized. Julian Huxley's concept of cultural evolution best summarizes this vision. We literally have a choice between trying to be better human beings or not trying and becoming something less. The view is Utopian; like all of man's philosophical religious, political, and educational visions, it is doubtlessly only partially achievable. However, this does not make them work less since "we create the world we live in by our expectations and attitudes, our ideas and ideals."[46]

This sustaining vision is also moralistic just as the Odyssey is moralistic and this essay is moralistic: life imposes a moral task on man.[47] Homer's implicit acceptance of the teacher as a moralist who tells us how to behave is still valid--whether we wish it to be or not. He preferred to tell the Greeks how to behave in a way that reflected honor on themselves and their fellow man. We, as modern humanistic educators, can encourage students to choose the Homeric odyssey to humanism by nurturing human nature through levels of self-discipline, brotherly love, open-mindedness, ethical behavior, dignity, grace, virtue, and excellence. For those of us who love life, there is no choice. We are glad to have the challenge that humanities offers to all people "to rely on their own intelligence, courage, and effort in building their happiness and fashioning their destiny in this world."[48]

As true mentors, let us encourage ourselves and our Telemakhoi, as Homer encouraged the Greeks, to emulate the best characteristics of Odysseus: "The humane, much-enduring, serviceable, widely experienced, resourceful hero,...undaunted by the long littleness of life, the tricks of fate, and the apathy of the stars."[49] Let us as humanists strive to preserve, convey, and live the best of those models of mankind's aspirations known as the humanities.

NOTES

[1] Albert William Levi, *The Humanities Today* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1959), p. 46.

[2] S. Marshall Cohen as quoted in Malcolm G. Scully, "The Humanists' Lot," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 5 December 1977, p. 4.

[3] "The Bee," *Poems: 1957-1967* (Middleton, CN: Wysleyan University Press, 1967), p. 280.

[4] Anne Gere, "Humanities: Our Most Important Process," *English Journal*, 65 (Oct. 1976), p. 29.

[5] Werner Jaeger, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*, trans. Gilbert Heighet (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1939), p. 35.

[6] Moses Hadas, *Humanism: The Greek Ideal and Its Survival* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1960), p. 19.

[7] Hadas, *Humanism*, pp. 71-72.

[8] William Hazlitt as quoted in H.J. Blackham, ed., *Objections to Humanism* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lipincott Co., 1963), p. 117.

[9] "Is Humanist Utopian?" *Objections to Humanism*, H.J. Blackham, ed. (Philadelphia: J.B. Lipincott Co., 1963), p. 102.

[10] Erich Fromm, *The Heart of Man: Its Genius for Good and Evil* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964).

[11] Fromm, p. 115.

[12] Fromm, p. 116.

[13] Carl Gustav Jung, Modern Man in Search of a Soul, trans. W.S. Sell and C.F. Baynes (1933; rpt. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, Inc., 1964), p. 41.

[14] Jung, p. 60.

[15] See Kathleen Nott, "Is Rationalism Sterile?" Objections to Humanism, H.J. Blackham, ed. (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, Co., 1963), pp. 55-78.

[16] Lester A. Kirkendall, "Humanism as I View It, "The Humanist Alternative: Some Definitions of Humanism, Paul W. Kurtz, ed. (Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books, 1973), p. 118.

[17] Paul J. Tillich, The Courage to Be (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), p. 50.

[18] Howard W. Clarke, The Art of the Odyssey (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1967), pp. 73-74.

[19] Clarke, pp. 19-20.

[20] Quoted in Ronald W. Hepburn, "A Critique of Humanist Theology," Objections to Humanism, H.J. Blackham, ed. p. 34.

[21] Homer, p. 239 (Od. XIII, ll. 122-165).

[22] L.A. Post, "The Moral Pattern in Homer," Transactions of the American Philological Association, 70 (1939), p. 169.

[23] Richard Lattimore, "Introduction," Hesiod's The Works and Days, trans. Richard Lattimore (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1959), pp. 7-8.

[24] William Bedell Stanford, The Ulysses Theme: A Study in the Adaptability of a Traditional Hero (Oxford: Basil Blackwood, 1954), p. 43.

[25] Viktor E. Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962), pp. 98-99 and 105.

[26] Clarke, p. 72.

[27] Nikos Kazantzakis, The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel, trans. Kimon Friar (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1958).

[28] Gordon Allport, Becoming: Basic Considerations for a Psychology of Personality (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), p. 91.

[29] Lloyd and Mary Morain, "Humanism: A Joyous View," The Humanist Alternative: Some Definitions of Humanism, P. Kurtz ed., (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1973), p. 125.

[30] William Arrowsmith, "The Shame of the Graduate Schools," Harper's Magazine, 232 (March 1966), p. 56.

[31] Kazantzakis, Book IV, l. 954.

[32] Jaeger, pp. 35-6.

[33] "Postscript," Homer's The Odyssey, trans. Robert Fitzgerald, p. 506.

[34] W. Stanford, p. 34.

[35] Nott in Blackhorn, p. 72.

[36] Hadas, Humanism, p. 26.

[37] Hadas, Humanism, p. 27.

[38] David L. Norton, Personal Destinies: A Philosophy of Ethical Individualism. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. ix.

[39] See A.H. Maslow "Self-Actualizing People: A Study of Psychological Health," The Self: Explorations in Personal Growth, ed. Clark E. Moustakas (New York: Harper Colophon Books, pp. 160-194.

[40] Frankl, p. 107.

[41] Humanist Anthology: From Confucius to Bertrand Russell, Margaret K. Knight, ed. (London: Barrie and Rockcliff, 1961), p. 129.

[42] Hadas, Humanism, p. 22.

[43] Kazantzakis, p. xxii.

[44] Frankl, p. 62.

[45] Post, p. 169.

[46] H.J. Blackham, "The Pointlessness of it All," Objections to Humanism, H.J. Blackham, ed., p. 108.

[47] Blackham, p. 110. I have given my paraphrase of Blackham's interpretation of the humanism of Pomponazzi (1462-1524).

[48] Corliss Lamont, quoted in Blackham, "Introduction," p. 23.

[49] Stanford, p. 222.

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THE AMERICAN MUSICAL: A VALUE-REFLECTING RITUAL

WAYNE H. FREEMAN

I

America has developed two distinct forms of musical theater: the musical comedy and the musical play. One is mostly frivolous entertainment and the other is a more serious art form concerned "mainly with ideas and important human values."[1] The musical comedies "are musicals that defy examination, because they are largely 'mindless' and just good fun."[2] The purpose of Anything Goes, for example, is to entertain; its plot serves only as a vehicle to tie the gags and songs together. However, most of the successful and substantial musicals of the past generation have been of the second genre, the musical play. Follies, A Chorus Line, Cabaret, and Shenandoah represent a type of American musical which has developed into a ritual that reflects, and therefore reinforces, our values. It is this musical genre which has made the greatest contribution to the transmission and strengthening of cultural literacy and which holds the greatest potential for furthering the understanding of our cultural tradition. For clarity, however, I will hereafter refer to all American musical theater, regardless of subtle differences, by the term "musical".

Historically, the values reflected and reinforced in these musicals both endure and change. This apparent contradiction is a necessary and natural quality of social values in all aspects of life. In The Nature of Human Values, Milton Rokeach defines value: "an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence."[3] Webster's New World Dictionary further defines values as the social principles, goals, or standards held or accented by an individual, class, or society. A value system, then, is "an enduring organization of beliefs concerning preferable modes of conduct or end-states of existence along a continuum of relative importance."[4] Furthermore Rokeach speaks of five characteristics of value systems.

1. The total number of values that a person possesses is relatively small.
2. All men everywhere possess the same values to different degrees.
3. Values are organized into value systems.
4. The antecedents of human values can be traced to culture, society and its institutions, and personality.
5. The consequences of human values will be manifest in virtually all phenomena that social scientists might consider worth investigating and understanding.[5]

Thus, the values we and our greater sociological plurality possess stay with us always. What changes is the relative scale of importance we place on these values through time, not the nature of that value itself. (For example, murder is accepted during times of war.) In other words, a value is a variable part of our behavior that leads to emotional action or reaction when activated by some form of external stimulus. Musicals as period pieces illustrate this changing yet enduring quality of values. People act out their personal and mythical lives on stage, based upon value preferences and determined by choices dictated by the situation and stimuli of the moment.

It is because of emotional action that a musical stimulates our thinking about social values and provides us with a perspective on reality.

> It's not life: people don't dance and sing like this in life. It's a show. But go along with it, and you'll be surprised how much life you can see through it....The best musicals... can go deeper. Without pretending to give us the illusion of life, at certain moments they do exactly that. They are miraculously vibrant and potent illusion, addressed not to the eyes but to the blood, which dances to it. Musicals are about how life feels, not how it looks. They can trace emotions with a suppleness that makes realistic drama seem arthritic.[6]

However, since all of the performing and visual arts coexist in the musical, it is this multi-media bombardment of the senses that makes an audience feel "caught up" from downbeat to final curtain. In any live theater setting the audience becomes a part of an emotional force emanating from the proscenium arch. The involvement in a performance of dialogue, choreography and music within the confines of time and space--complete with errors in balance, memory, movement, dynamics, harmony and melody--offers an avenue to reality rather than an escape from it.

II

This ritualistic reflection of values in the American musical can be traced throughout its development. The first musical performed in America was the English ballad Flora, presented in Charleston, South Carolina, on February 8, 1735. In 1828, the first original American musical, a burlesque treatment of Hamlet, appeared. Minstrel shows, the first to contain popular music, were written and performed in Virginia by 1847. The show most often considered to be the first American musical was a melodramatic spectacle The Black Crook which opened in New York in 1866. Nonetheless, it was not until 1874 that the term "musical comedy" was first used in describing a burlesque of Evangeline.

Throughout the next seventy-five years operettas, reviews, extravaganzas and vaudeville flourished under the direction of Gilbert and Sullivan, Rudolph Frime, Sigmund Romberg and Flo Ziegfield. The most notable creator of the musical after the turn of the century was George M. Cohan, who celebrated American pride and patriotism with emotion-stirring songs such as "It's A Grand Old Flag" and "I'm A Yankee Doodle Dandy."

In 1943, Oklahoma by Rogers and Hamerstein established a new form for the American musical. The 1940 production of Rogers and Harts' Pal Joey had begun these ritualistic practices but the earlier audience responded coolly to "a song-and-dance production with living, three-dimensional figures, talking and behaving like human beings."[7] Oklahoma then set the precedents for the new musical play, precedents for plot, characters, dancing, music, and production.[8] This new genre transformed burlesque, operetta, comic opera, minstrel, extravanganzas, vaudevilles, and review into a ritual formula that both entertains and teaches its audience.

III

To understand the meaning of ritual in the musical, one must be aware of the complex relationships among plot, sets, costumes, music, staging, and dialogue. Because these elements are handled in certain conventionally prescribed ways, they share similarities with any solemn act or observance that follows the rules of accepted custom (for example, a wedding, a funeral, or a mass). The ritual serves to enhance and enrich the social values it carries.

The first aspect of this form is the plot.

> On the simplest level, the story line follows this pattern: boy and girl meet; boy and girl are separated; boy and girl are united. Around this structure the musical revolves, sometimes adding comic lovers or following several sets of lovers and throwing all varieties of obstacles in their paths.[9]

The plot of the musical follows this basic outline: 1) a short dialogue; 2) an opening production number; 3) a series of scenes with action and dialogue incorporating both musical and dancing numbers which further develop the plot; 4) a crisis scene to end Act I; 5) a resolution of the crisis in Act II; 6) a final production number. The musical nearly always has two acts: the first is longer than the second; the second echoes the first through musical reprises.[10] This is the ritual formula followed by most successful musicals since 1943.

Another element of the ritual, in addition to the plot, is its visual presentation. Certainly the musical has a tradition of extravagant production, and many of the earlier shows (The Black Crook, for example) relied almost exclusively on elaborate settings, costumes, and stage effects. But in the modern musical, the visual effects serve a distinct purpose that may be divided into three interrelated functions: "clarification of the plot, intensification of the action, and identification of setting and characters."[11]

Costuming, for example, receives careful attention because it clarifies, intensifies, and identifies. In order to do so, costumes follow a set form. The leading characters are dressed most elaborately; the supporting characters, a little less so; and the chorus, most simply. For instance, the chorus members in Hello, Dolly! were clothed in carefully coordinated turn-of-the-century costume, but not nearly as ornately as Dolly and

Vandergelder were. In turn, the complexity of the supporting characters' costumes lay somewhere between the simplicity of the chorus and the embellishment of the leads.

> The ritual of the musical ...is thus governed by a set form that relies on spectacular visual effects to achieve its purpose. At first consideration, though, it might seem that the only purpose of the musical is to entertain; but the lasting popularity of the musical suggests that they offer something more than boy-meets-girl stories, songs, dance routines, and spectacular stage effects. Just as any ritual clothes its message in form and visual design that are pleasing to the viewer and will engage his attention, the musical... tells a story that contains a message.[12]

The subtlety with which the musical conveys its message is due, in part, to its form which embeds values and social comment within its music; Irvine and Kirkpatrick have noted that "because the musical form has been considered entertainment and not a form of argumentative discourse, it has traditionally been insulated from the moral and/or cultural restraints normally associated with verbal discourse."[13] Listeners are not conditioned to argue with messages in music as they are with obvious rhetorical statements. Musical communications are simply generic. This makes persuasion by music much easier and the range of potential topics greater.

But the musical line is not the only means dramatists use to seduce audiences into reflecting upon fiercely held values.

> The good dramatist knows he must capture their [an audiences] imagination and hold it. To do this he uses any number of means, of which those of least use to him are intellectual. If the audience wants to be carried away, the dramatist must induce surrender, so that he doesn't want to appeal to reason, rationalization, or objectivity; these are not states of mind which will help an audience to surrender. No. The appeal in the theater must be to the senses, emotions and instincts. So we have colour, movement, rhythmical and musical sounds and use of words, and we have appeals to the half-conscious and the unconscious, symbols, myths, and rituals.[14]

In this manner playwrights and composers of musicals give us images of our own values in ritualistic form. Part of the fascination of the musical is the discovery of these images. Laurence J. Peter speaks of the potential this reflection has for both entertainment and thought. He suggests that since we don't recognize ourselves immediately in this reflective mirror, we laugh before realizing the source of the humor. An audience viewing Cabaret, Company or Follies for the first time would likely experience this initial laughter. Only later would the human foibles and despair presented through these musicals become salient.

IV

Historically, cultures have used ritual to strengthen social values and to reflect rather than foreshadow cultural change.

> Ritual is a device we use to give our lives scale and significance, to reassure ourselves as to the importance of our values, to celebrate such values. We create rituals when we wish to strengthen, celebrate or define our common life and common values, or when we want to give ourselves confidence to undertake a certain course of action. A ritual generally takes the form of repeating a pattern of words and gestures which tend to excite us above a normal state of mind. Once this state of mind is induced, we are receptive and suggestible and ready for the climax of the rite. At the climax the essential nature of something is changed.[15]

These cultural features of ritual are characteristic of theater as well. Art doesn't change the world: art reflects it. "It is going to take more than an evening's image making and more than a little myth and ritual to make us accept something which is at variance with our own fiercely defended unconscious values."[16] Instead our values are not changed by theater: they are acted out in it. If the values dramatized on stage are acceptable in the audience's context, the listeners will be receptive to the drama's message. If they do not tolerate the values presented, they will reject the musical categorically.

In 1967 many critics believed Hair to be an exception to this convention. They perceived it a revolution against not only the establishment, but also against the musical as a form. However, although Hair is both exceptional and revolutionary in many respects, it is also a typical musical. As critic Robert Brustein noted, it was "too closely linked to the meretricious conventions of American musicals[17] to change anything much.

To understand the exceptional qualities of Hair, one must be aware that "development of the American musical... cannot be traced without some reference to the political, social, and cultural events against the background of which that development was taking place."[18] Hair is undoubtedly the most topical musical ever produced. It publicly celebrates the rejection of traditional values. This evolutionary process reflects certain events and personalities which moved our nation from a posture of nationalism to one of national guilt and uncertainty. The advent of the Beatles and the assassinations of the Kennedys, coupled with the growing unpopularity of the Vietnamese war and an assertive drug-rock subculture, ushered in a new age in America. The acceptance of traditional beliefs, conditions, and controls over life seemed less tenable. It was the dawning of a new concern and perspective about human control over one's destiny. It was, to paraphrase Hair, the dawning of the age of Aquarius.

Hair was also revolutionary theatrically because conventional directing techniques were not practiced. In more traditional theater, a musical reaches its opening night by following these approximate steps: casting; memorization of lines; blocking and staging under careful direction; rehearsal until all movement and dialogue are routine; addition of complete sets, props, and lighting; more rehearsal; addition of the orchestra and costumes; and still more rehearsal under continued strict direction. Hair's directors, however, followed few of these rules. They were continually casting (the cast was seldom the same unit) and the rehearsals were void of specific direction. Rehearsals, instead, consisted mainly of Pavlovian conditioning games designed to make the tribe act with apparent spontaneity to certain stage stimuli.

The most notable example of unconventional directing techniques was the controversial nude scene at the end of Act I. The cast was not directed to take their clothes off by specific direction. It became a nude scene by conditioning the cast through the pseudo-sexual games played in rehearsal and by suggestion of the director who only "inferred" its appropriateness as an anti-establishment symbolic gesture. In the instance of Hair, this directing technique was successful. Larrie Davis, a member of the tribe, described this process:

> Everything he [Producer Michael Butler] said implied an attitude of "down with the establishment" or "down with the theater establishment." It became a kind of litany. He would tell us that rules are meant to be broken; no one should have to do anything he doesn't want to do; we are all equal; and above all, a love-tribe, so love, love yourselves, one another and above all, the audience...We had to be evangelical, because

> Hair set out to change people, not just entertain them.[19]

This attempt at the profound, however, didn't make Hair different; it made it typical because it reflected changing American values. Nevertheless it is unique in reflecting social change while that change was in process. Change always evokes a sense of shock from those who have not yet accepted the inevitable. The things that seemed so shocking to middle America in 1967 have become facts of life in 1978: the discussion of sexual preference and alternate lifestyles (Hair preached acceptance of homosexuality), the unisex approach to dressing (blue jeans were costumes in Hair), the progress of the equal rights movement (Hair advocated women's equality), the decriminalization of marijuana offenses (Hair supported the innocence of this drug), the rising divorce rate (Hair's innuendo was a mockery of marriage), the low esteem for government and patriotism (Hair was anti-establishment), the end of the draft (Hair held draft card burnings), and the sexual revolution and the length of male hair styles (Hair's cast were promiscuous long-hairs). The presentation of all of these controversial issues is supported by rock music of the counter-culture.

Hair is important as a particularly graphic illustration of the symptoms idiomatic to the post-war era in America. However, other musicals both before and after Hair have commented upon the increased complexity of our lives since the war. Hair represents both a continuation of this convention and its unique transformation.

V

Since World War II, musicals have described complex human conditions in which post-war Americans found themselves. Before World War II the population of America was comparatively stable. Communities were places where people grew up, had roots, lived, worshiped and died. Most people knew their neighbors, lived near their parents, worked near their homes, traveled within a limited geographic area, held firm religious beliefs, and expected little from life; it was widely accepted that it was external conditions, government, and God "from Whom all blessings flowed."

The war changed all that. It changed the way Americans thought and lived by precipitating the need for a mobile society and whetting the appetite to travel. It created an explosion in technology that brought television, jet planes, hydrogen bombs, and instant-plastic-disposable-mass everything.

Conditions brought on by the rapid geometric expansion in population, government, science and technology fostered a lack of spiritual equilibrium. Darwinian theory, the actuality of cloning and the proliferation of scientific breakthroughs have added to a lack of faith in things unseen. The bumper stickers say "I Found It" but there is an increasing doubt about what "it" actually is. The fact that church attendance is down and psychoanalysis up is silent testimony to this reality.

The effects of these events upon America are manifest in all arts, from abstract painting to popular music. This is true of the American musical, as well. The increase in psychiatric problems is exemplified by Lady In The Dark (1949), a musical about the guilt of living together as unmarrieds and the lack of definition in our personal goals.

The iconoclastic hedonism manifest in Hair has been mentioned at length; preceeding it by several years was Cabaret, a musical nearly as shocking. Cabaret's story refers to human decadence, corruption, greed, and passions. Although set in pre-war Germany, it is actually a parable of American life of the fifties. The characters, even the more lovable ones, are people interested only in themselves. The characters are so self-oriented that they can not or would not concern themselves with the larger immediate and imperative issues in life. Recognition of the Jews as equals, for example, requires simply too much involvement. It is far easier for the Emcee only to dance with a female gorilla and comment that she doesn't look Jewish at all. The show's message concerns the blind pursuit of personal pleasure and its resulting degradation of the human spirit and suggests that life---unless we guard against its decadence---is a Cabaret, old chum.

The 1970 musical Follies reflects the growing lack of faith, the increasing acceptance of existentialist philosophy, and our increasing divorce rate: aging actors and actresses return to campus in an attempt to recapture the vigor of their younger days.

> Follies represented a state of mind of America between the two world wars. Up until 1945, America was the good guy, everything was idealistic and hopeful and America was going to lead the world. Now you see the country is a riot of national guilt, the dream has collapsed, everything has turned to rubble underfoot, and that's what the show was about also...the collapse of the dream. It's not about how difficult it is to stay married over a period of thirty years....It's how all your hopes tarnish and how if you live on regret and despair you might as well pack up, for to live in the past is foolish.[20]

Another 1970 musical, Company, dealt with the increasing difficulty in developing meaningful interpersonal relationships. A lone unmarried man is the focus of a crowd of couples who devise a series of relationships to make him "happy."

> Company...dealt with the increasing difficulty of making one-to-one relationships in an increasingly dehumanized society....It's the lonely crowd syndrome. It's also about expecting relationships to be what they're not.[21]

As a final example, A Chorus Line (1975) isolates and magnifies our collective loneliness through the metaphor of a chorus-line audition. Each auditioning chorus member tells of a personal search for meaning in life and of the imperative need to belong. One member concedes, "God, I hope I get it [the part being cast]." The cast admits to submitting to this humiliating audition for "love." A first interpretation suggests a love of work in the chorus line. However, further reflection brings the realization that the cast of A Chorus Line, and society at large, is willing to endure almost any dehumanizing process in order to experience the "love" inherent in belonging to an identifiable group.

VI

The musical, then, is a ritual reflecting our changing values in order to reinforce them. Since World War II musicals have focused on a search for meaning and personal identity in an age of anxiety. The ritual of the American musical will, no doubt, continue as long as people need to reaffirm their personal beliefs or until they discover a new form to provide this reaffirmation.

NOTES

[1] David Ewen, *The Story of America's Musical Theater* (New York: Chilton Company, 1961), p. 246.

[2] Hal Prince, *Contradictions: Notes on Twenty-six Years in the Theater* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1974), p. 24.

[3] Milton Rokeach, *The Nature of Human Values* (New York: Free Press, 1973), p. 5.

[4] Rokeach, p. 5.

[5] Rokeach, p. 3.

[6] Dan Sullivan, "On Musicals: They Never Forget Where Theater Was At," *Los Angeles Times*, Calendar Section, 19 April 1970, p. 22.

[7] Stanley Green, *The World of Musical Comedy* (New York: A. A. Barnes and Company, 1968), p. 161.

[8] Abe Laufe, *Broadway's Greatest Musicals* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1969), p. 67.

[9] Robert Ross, *Research: An Introduction* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1974), p. 145.

[10] Ross, p. 147.

[11] H.D. Albright, William P. Halstead and Lee Mitchell, *Principles of Theater Art* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1968), p. 226.

[12] Ross, p. 157.

[13] James R. Irvine and Walter G. Kirkpatrick, "The Musical Form in Rhetorical Exchange: Theoretical Considerations," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 58 (1972) p. 272.

[14] Ann Jellicoe, Some Unconscious Influences in the Theatre (London: Cambridge University Press, 1967), pp. 17-18.

[15] Jellicoe, p. 21.

[16] Jellicoe, p. 36.

[17] Ross, p. 159.

[18] Lebman Engle, The American Musical Theater: A Consideration, Rev. ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1975), p. 69.

[19] Lorrie Davis with Rachel Gallagher, Letting Down My Hair (New York: Arthur Fields Books, Inc., 1973), p. 41.

[20] Craig Zadan, Sondheim and Co. (New York: Macmillan, 1974), p. 152.

[21] Zadan, p. 131.

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COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND LITERACY

DONALD B. EPSTEIN

I

Any proposal to increase the literacy skills of community college students must recognize and incorporate the non-traditional nature of these students. It must recognize that most of these students use the community college as a vehicle for self-improvement and social and economic mobility through occupational training rather than completing a baccalaureate degree. However, this training must include literacy both for the technical demands of most jobs today and for the increasing flexibility in contemporary career patterns.

Literacy will help students' self-improvement by increasing their ability to express desires and opinions coherently and to make feelings about themselves come out in a positive manner. This is not an easy task, and any literacy program, if it is to succeed, must be candid with students. They must be told, at the outset, of the time involved to improve literacy skills. They must be made aware that two years of community college training may encompass three to four years' work for those deficient in basic academic skills. Students must be intensively counseled on a one-to-one basis and be made to see, through a special course or other aid, that they are primarily responsible for their own success or failure. Students must be tested and evaluated before any meaningful counseling can occur and the college must commit its resources to aiding this program.

II

Literacy has been the traditional way of exerting power by a segment of the population concerned with perpetuating its privileged status by monopolizing essential knowledge. Usually this knowledge involved a religious or state function; a priesthood could interpret omens from the heavens or derive laws from a deity and transcribe inventory records into permanent form either on papyrus or stone. From the dawn of civilization in Egypt and Mesopotamia, those who possessed skills in literacy were raised to the highest positions in the state. Indeed, no state can exist for any length of time in a permanent location without written records of families and boundaries. The art of writing was second in importance only to warrior skills for ancient societies. Every advanced culture in the world which developed into a flourishing and lasting civilization has had to develop a written language.

But this written language was not a broadly based skill. On the contrary, the skill was often interwoven with taboos regulating the spread of secrets of a scribal class. Education was thus confined to an upper crust of state officials, religious leaders and scribes with the masses left out of the secrets. Learning was entirely private until very late in antiquity and state support of literacy training was unthinkable. Still, a literary culture dominated the world of learning by the time of Greece and Rome. Long and complex works of poetry and philosophy were transcribed and stored in libraries though practical access to these sources was restricted to those who could read. Popular culture was transmitted orally.

In the medieval period no substantial change in this pattern occurred except to restrict the sources of literacy to Christian culture, excluding a broad category of tales from Greece and Rome. A priestly class held an almost exclusive monopoly of literacy with few exceptions. Indeed, the Germanic rulers of Europe scoffed at reading as being only fit for priests. The technology of literacy has not changed since the days of Egypt. The majority of manuscripts being produced were recorded on either vellum or papyrus, a slow and expensive process of reproduction. Public education was confined to cathedral schools and was mainly for those who were destined for the priesthood.

However, in the high Middle Ages, first in Italy, and later in Northern Europe, a profound change was occurring that would upset two millenia of literary tradition. This was the result of the rise of a new type of person, the middle class merchant, and a new technology of literacy. This change was not brought about by the invention of printing as most people would suppose. It was heralded by the discovery and introduction to the West of the Chinese art of papermaking. The Italian merchants, by the twelfth century, had developed an international commerce with the Orient which necessitated new forms of business techniques such as insurance contracts. The record-keeping function of business exploded exponentially until trade would have otherwise been stifled by the lack of a receptor medium. (Remember that it took seven hundred sheep to produce enough vellum for one Bible.) Paper making solved the immediate medium problem; and the business community assumed responsibility for educating a new sort of person, literate in the practical skills of letter writing and business record keeping. Merchants established their own schools for training clerks (the name of course deriving from the clergy, but not taking on a secular meaning).

These schools began to produce new textbooks such as the _ars_ _dictaminis_, the art of letter writing (later medieval students would carry these not only into the merchant schools, but into the new universities as well). An entirely new body of students appeared in Europe starting in the thirteenth century. These were essentially sons of illiterate but successful peasants who wished to join the ranks of the city merchants. As the demand for literacy increased among the merchant class the need for skilled teachers appeared as well, thus causing an even greater demand for literary training. The invention of printing in the mid-fifteenth century only added fuel to this fire of demand by sharply reducing the cost of reproducing books on the paper medium. Indeed the cost of school texts was reduced by 99%.

When we add the sixteenth century development in religious thought to the technology of literacy, the mixture produces a greater desire and determination to read and write. First of all, the Protestant revolution led by Luther and Calvin emphasized the religious necessity of Bible reading for salvation, thus making literacy for the masses a holy duty. In Catholic areas the same spirit of religious literacy prevailed with corresponding movements to increase literacy. In addition both religious groups wanted to convert the newly discovered American Indians and spread the faith to the new continent.

A shaping influence upon American historical events in the seventeenth century was the settlers' predisposition to found schools. New England became the center of this movement. There, new universities were established to train ministers, but these ministers came from quite ordinary backgrounds by European standards. A pre-college school was necessary to teach these hitherto illiterate people elementary literacy for Bible reading.

In addition, New England's democratic political atmosphere, with its town meetings and broad-based Church governance, necessitated literate citizens and congregants.

Every New England town had a common school to teach elementary reading. This school was supported by public taxes on land and was run by a school committee elected by the townspeople. The curriculum was slanted heavily towards the moral and Protestant, but secular scholarship prevailed. This movement came to be expanded in the early nineteenth century to embrace the newly arriving Irish immigrants. Horace Mann, the Boston school superintendant of the 1820's, had a vision of universal educational systems extending through adolescence, giving every child literacy skills as well as instruction in American citizenship and vocational advantages. Further, this trend was fed by the growing spirit of nationalism and western expansion in America, which needed new people from Europe to mold into new Americans. Poverty stricken Irish, Germans, Italians and Jews responded eagerly to the idea of a free public education, an upper class prerogative in Europe. Moreover, each of these cultures had an historic tradition which respected the word as divine and the scholar as saintly. It took little convincing to persuade these new citizens to support public education and to discipline their children to accept the rigors of the schoolhouse.

Even beyond the elementary education given in the local school, Americans desired a greater chance to participate in a community of learning. College education, restricted to a small class of people before the American Revolution and only used for training ministers, physicians and lawyers, was given a democratic impetus from the beginnings of the nation. Thomas Jefferson founded the University of Virginia as a public non-sectarian school in the 1790's. The University of Pennsylvania, founded by Benjamin Franklin, was established for the purpose of training poor youth to the highest degree. The open door to college was not a twentieth century idea, but a nineteenth century concept incorporated in two events. First, the City College of New York was founded in 1840, fostering the principle of a free college for local residents unable to attend private schools for reasons of finance. Second, the Morrill Act (1868) established land grant colleges to train the rural population in useful knowledge, thus beginning the connection between higher education and the practical and vocational skills such as agriculture and mechanical engineering. Both land grant colleges and city colleges had an "open door"; any high school graduate was eligible to attend.

To both these institutions flocked the sons of immigrants and farmers, eager to learn new skills which would propel them into the middle class and into secure jobs. It was a far cry from Oxford and Cambridge, but from the pragmatic American point of view, it worked. Old jobs considered beneath the dignity of Europeans came to have new status with an American college degree behind them. This, coupled with an almost unbroken economic expansion lasting into the 1920's, made college training tantamount to economic success. After World War II, this economic boom continued to create a demand for technically trained students in all fields with, again, unlimited job possibilities. New money was obtained for education through federal assistance starting with the National Student Administration in the 1930's and continuing with the G.I. Bill and scholarship grants.

The supply of money available from federal and local sources created a demand for educational services which even the expansion-minded colleges could not keep up with. Thus the impetus was given for the founding of the community college movement during the period 1945-1955. Although junior colleges had existed for a long time in some communities, the idea of a comprehensive college embracing both academic and technical-vocational education was new. Further, this new idea was tied to existing political divisions for school districts, often making the college an adjunct to the local high school.

But the problems began to arise. Starting with the 1960's and continuing to the present, several new factors came into being which made the job of the new comprehensive community college far different from its earlier models, the city and land grant colleges. First of all, the student population began declining for the first time in history. Birth rates dwindled in the 1950's and reached a zero growth rate by the late 1960's. No longer could an ever-growing population be counted on to expand educational institutions. Second, the saturation point had been reached in higher education: almost all qualified students were attending a postsecondary school by 1970. The second and third generation of college students were emerging from the pioneering efforts of the city and land grant colleges. These students assumed that they would go to college, not as a rare privilege, but as a right. Furthermore, this group was not expanding but, in fact, was declining in numbers. If the colleges were to survive, especially the newly founded community colleges which did not have the academic or technical reputation of the older schools, then a new clientele had to be found.

III

And this clientele was indeed forthcoming. It was produced by the very technology that the four-year schools created. Automation began to eliminate traditional unskilled manual labor jobs, thus displacing millions of workers and leaving their offspring with no hope of entering the local mill at 18. These individuals quickly perceived the new community colleges as a way out of poverty or deadend jobs into new careers, but they had no idea of what that education encompassed. An increasingly problematic social order brought students from diverse backgrounds. Next, a brief surge was created by the unpopular Vietnam war which both offered exemption from the draft for college students and, at the same time, gave money to veterans; however, reduced benefits for attending college made the community college the only alternative.

Thus, the combination of history, economics, war, and a changing learning environment led to a new student population which has to cope with the demands of higher education without a background in academic training. Added to this is the fact that a new technology of learning rendered many students incapable of using traditional academic skills. The widespread use of television and films after World War II led to a decline in reading: most people gained their news and entertainment not from the Guttenburg medium but from the electronic screen. Concommitant with educational demands of the new students was the fact that often these students could not read at levels formerly thought to be minimally acceptable for college students. Today, these problems are not confined to the community college but present a trend recognized by all colleges. Community colleges, however, by their very nature as open-door institutions attract students with skill levels below those of four-year schools. The different cultural background and value for education and the problems of returning students create an abyss between the traditional expectations of higher education and the newer realities of unprepared students.

The educational problems associated with these events are complex, dealing with educational policy and expectations, individual psychology, and cultural phenomena. The aspect of pedagogy best treated is an area that we, as teachers, can affect to the greatest degree--learning disabilities. First of all, there must be a recognition of the problem and its causes. We are not dealing with traditional students, but ones who come from an environment where learning is at a distinct disadvantage. They are not ready to read or write or compete at anywhere near a college level. And we cannot hope to teach them subject matter on the college level unless we are prepared to treat their differences. Placing them directly into college level classes leads only to dilution of course materials or to a frustrating phenomena of attrition.

IV

The best example that I know of dealing with this problem is a Guided Studies Program recently instituted on an experimental basis at Clackamas Community College

(Oregon), under the direction of Mr. Kent Heaton of the Counseling Department. It is a program that deliberately leaves out all reference to remediation. First of all, it acknowledges a fact about community colleges long recognized but never used--that our students are from a wide range of abilities and go to school for a wide variety of reasons. Thus, we pretest every student upon entrance to the college, regardless of the number of hours taken or courses chosen. A basic literacy level is required in order for a student to be admitted into regular courses of any curriculum. If a minimum score is not achieved either by the American College Test or by the Scholastic Aptitude Test, the student is strongly directed and counseled into the Guided Studies Program (see Table 1). The scores on these national tests or on those administered by the college counseling and mathematics departments are used to place students in appropriate courses. What we have found at Clackamas is that about 20-25% of all students (vocational and academic) are eligible for this program.

The program consists of three components. After the testing phase comes an intense period of individual counseling in which students are advised into a program tailored to their individual needs. For example, we find that some students can achieve basic literacy but not computational skills; those students would be allowed to take a college level writing course but would be required to take a remedial course in arithmetic. It is the rare student that does not possess some basic skills, but many do not possess all the skills necessary for entry level college work. There are a variety of courses and programs available at Clackamas to fulfill students' needs, ranging from formal remedial English courses which carry no college credit to individual tutoring by peers. There are laboratories devoted to programmed learning, designed to improve writing, math skills and reading comprehension.

But the Guided Studies Program does not end here. In addition to the courses, the program recognizes the new student's uncertainty in entering a new learning environment. The program acknowledges that the individuals most in need of help are those who often have the greatest psychological barriers to success. To help them, all students in the Guided Studies Program are required to take a new type of psychology course which carries college credit. "Psychology of Personality" is taught by the counseling department. The aim of the course is the individual recognition of self and the assumption of responsibility for actions. Often these students have gone through life blaming parents, teachers, or spouses for their failure and have never recognized their own responsibility for their actions. This course is designed to alter that view and asks the students truly to look at themselves for the first time in their lives.

The third phase of this program is designed to overcome the cultural barriers to education. This part seeks to make the student comfortable in a new world of learning and to ease the transition from street corner to classroom. Basically, Clackamas Community College has designed a course called "Humanities Experience" which introduces the student to the world of the arts, literature, and history through local experiences such as folklore, historic building tours, free concerts, and plays. It attempts to bring the community's cultural and historical resources into being; students, often for the first time in their lives, are made to recognize that their community has a life not linked to mere survival but attached to the highest aspirations of all humankind. "Culture" is not an alien term reserved for the rich and well educated but belongs to everybody, including themselves, for they are part of a rich cultural heritage that ancestors, from whatever world region, brought to this country and made a part of a new cultural system.

The results of this experiment so far have been heartening. First of all, Clackamas was faced with the traditional problem of high attrition in the lower quartile of the student population. Up to 95% of these individuals simply gave up and left college. Those that went to regular classes and struggled often inflicted their problems on the classes, forcing teachers to lower expectations and dilute courses so as to help those who were floundering. By removing them from the mainstream of academic and vocational courses, teachers can increase aims for academic performance and not lose those students who feel that simplistic teaching reduces the community college to the level of a glorified high school. By giving these problem students special attention and courses, their attrition rate has been reduced by 75%. Further, because of the requirement that all Guided Studies students take the course on personality, a new sense of responsibility is being developed. Questionnaires administered by the college to students after one term have indicated that this phase--the individual responsibility--has had the greatest impact on their lives.

Also enrollment has increased in the "Humanities Experience" course; here vocational students are induced to take college level history and literature courses as part of their general education. The effect, hopefully, will be a positive one for the college as a whole; when these students enter the regular program and stay the full two years, the faculty will be able to work with them to the greatest extent of their abilities. By reducing the attrition rate, the costs of the program (which are substantial because of the time involved and the low student/teacher ratio that remedial classes demand) will be repaid through increased FTE over longer periods of time.

IV

A word now about the general academic faculty. Literacy is not the prime responsibility of the counseling department or the reading laboratory or the English department. It is the job of every instructor to set an example. And this can only be accomplished by more hard work added to an already burdensome schedule. Teachers must require their students to write essay examinations and to read the books in the library. They must enforce strict grammatical rules if only to impress students with the importance of form as well as content. Every teacher must volunteer to help the English, reading and counseling departments in doing their job of bringing up the skill levels of students. And above all teachers must not give up and despair about their students. It does us no good to say that we are given the lowest half of the lot or the worst academic achievers. We must use all the force of our knowledge and abilities to bring up the skill level of the students we have. To do otherwise would be to make the community college an adjunct of the social welfare system, with teachers acting as adult babysitters.

Rather than that, all teachers must insist on high standards and be prepared to work with students over a long period to achieve those standards. Personally I have found that, in the long run, students will respect and learn more from those teachers who are willing to demand much of them but who are not aloof from addressing the special needs of people entering a new world of learning for the first time. Teachers should try to relate more to their students by seeing what skills students possess and using those skills in class. For example, I suspect, that many an English teacher who can turn out a fine English sentence cannot fix an automobile. Many a learned historian cannot read a welding textbook without a sense of frustration at not understanding the language. By relating English, social science and humanities courses to students' lives, perhaps a better way can be achieved at making learning more pleasant and joyful.

The community college can and, indeed, must be a place where high academic standards apply. Most insist that these standards must be supported in a way that takes into account the special nature of the people involved. The faculty must be prepared to sacrifice time in order to achieve these high standards and the college administration must commit the money necessary for excellence to prevail.

Table 1

INDICATORS USED TO DETERMINE SKILL DEFICIENCY AND LEVEL-APPROPRIATE COURSES AT CLACKAMAS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Test Scores		Clackamas C.C. Course
American College Test		
English	0-14%	WR 11 (Remedial English)
	15-27%	WR 12 (Fundamentals of English)
	28-29%	WR 121 (English Composition)
	90-100%	Honors English
Mathematics	0-10%	Mth 14 (Remedial Arithmetic)
	11-24%	Mth 20, 21 (Fundamentals of Algebra)
	25-38%	Mth 95 (Intermediate Algebra)
	39-64%	Mth 101 (College Algebra)
	65-89%	Mth 102 or 200 (Trigonometry or Calculus)
	90-99%	Mth 200 (Calculus)
Scholastic Aptitude Test		
English	-350	WR 11 (Remedial English)
	350-450	WR 12 (Fundamentals of English)
	450-700	WR 121 (English Composition)
	700-	Honors English
Mathematics	0-9	Mth 14 (Remedial Arithmetic)
	10-14	Mth 15 (Refresher Mathematics
	15-25	Mth 20, 21 (Fundamentals of Algebra)
	26-32	Mth 95 (Intermediate Algebra)
	33-41	Mth 101 (College Algebra)
	42-50	Mth 200 (Calculus)
Comparative Guidance and Placement Program Examination		
English	-38	WR 10 (Remedial English--tutorial)
	39-43	WR 11 (Remedial English)
	45-49	WR 12 (Fundamentals of English)
	51-	WR 121 (English Composition)
Reading	0-37	Rd 11 (Developmental Reading I)
	38-44	Rd 12 (Developmental Reading II)
	45-48	Rd 13 (Developmental Reading III)
	49-60	Eng 115 (Effective Reading)
Department Constructed Mathematics Test		
	0-12	Mth 14 (Remedial Arithmetic)
	13-18	Mth 15 (Refresher Mathematics)
	19-25	Mth 20, 21 (Fundamentals of Algebra)
	26-32	Mth 95 (Intermediate Algebra)
	33-38	Mth 101 (College Algebra)
	39-42	Math 102 (Trigonometry or Calculus)
	43-	Mth 200 (Calculus)

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HUMANISTIC LITERACY

SECTION II

HUMANISTIC LITERACY FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS

The two papers in this section present curricular attempts to address and develop language skills. Each presents an existing program currently in operation on a community college campus. Each suggests that these remedial programs be incorporated into existing curricula, to supplement and strengthen skills in all disciplines rather than serving as a tangent to existing programs. Each embodies the humanists' belief in the worth of the individual, in language as creator and reflector of thought, and in logical and disciplined study.

Margaret Byrd Boegeman has developed a writing program using autobiography as the integrating concept; this genre forms a natural bridge to humanistic disciplines and values by making human history and humane ideas the nucleus of study.

Peter L. Sharkey presents a campus-wide effort of one community college to improve language skills. Since writing skills increase substantially through opportunities to exercise them throughout the curriculum, this course of study provides the central focus for a coordinated effort through the community college curriculum.

Both these curricula present an emphasis upon the individual self as writer and creator. Both present direct examples of nontraditional approaches to literary training. Both are directed efforts toward humanistic literacy.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN ENGLISH COMPOSITION

MARGARET BYRD BOEGEMAN

I

The freshman composition course at the community college is frequently dreaded by student and teacher alike. The students are reluctantly compelled into a class they do not want to take, and the instructors are reluctantly compelled into a class they do not want to teach. The reason for the reluctance, on both parts, is the usually high quantity of work assigned and the usually low quality of work completed. Causes are myriad, having to do with the too often repeated reasons why Johnny and Janie can't read and write, with the students' often tedious and repetitive past twelve years of training, or with the fact that the class is compulsory. Students and teachers at the community college are additionally handicapped by the problem of low morale. Community college students in overwhelming numbers have the idea that they cannot succeed in academics, particularly in writing. Regardless of whether they are fresh out of high school or returning students and mature adults, and regardless of their actual ability, this fear prevails.

Consequently the first and major task of the instructor is to provide a situation in which the students believe they can learn. These students must maintain a modicum of confidence and self-esteem in order to learn, and while it is not our responsibility to establish these qualities in a student (not to mention the limits of our ability to do so) we can build on whatever confidence the students bring. At the very least, we must be sure that neither our material nor our methodology undermines it. We need to offer these students the kind of course which will challenge them and stimulate their interest without either intimidating them or condescending to them.

Therefore if a community college composition course is to be successful, the content (the reading and writing assignments) must be selected with this particular audience in mind. We must begin where the students are, basic as that sounds, and take them as far as they can go in the time we have. Just to keep them in class we must accomplish two things. First we must reach the students emotionally as well as intellectually and, second, we must show them sufficient and believable reasons for them to write. These students need a goal and purpose more immediate than a grade at the end of the semester (which is a poor motivator for students who believe they are going to fail anyway). They need to see that every reading and writing assignment has a direct bearing on their lives now, while they are in the class. It is only when they become comfortable and familiar with the skills of reading and writing--and often this takes a long time--that we can expect them to stake out long-term goals such as a grade, a degree, or an education for its own sake. Thus, we are in the position of trying to give a survival tool, like a life preserver, to a group of people who simply do not believe it will help them float.

Yet by allowing them to read something of immediate interest and to write something of immediate importance _to them_, it is possible that within one semester such students can be reading and writing at a respectable quality and quantity for freshman composition. By carefully selecting material and structuring assignments, one can even introduce them to literary form, sharpen their skills of criticism and transmit humanistic values, all without diverting the emphasis from reading and writing. One approach to composition which fills all these criteria focuses on personal writing, or autobiography.

Teachers have long recognized the value of personal writing in "warmup" exercises: writing from experience helps break the writer's block, and by beginning with the students' "home" territory, we can build students' confidence and interest in writing. Sustaining the initial focus on personal writing throughout the semester allows students to pursue a subject that is interesting, in a mode that is at least modestly successful for them, while simultaneously developing the same writing skills that are stressed in most traditional approaches to composition.

If students are going to be writing autobiography, then it is logical and appropriate for them to read in this genre also. I do not believe that students imitate the material they read, or even consciously learn how to write from reading other people, but I do assume that students better understand and are more comfortable with writing assignments when they have read a few examples of similar efforts.

II

Autobiography as a subject of study has several immediate and practical advantages. First, it is easy for the students to read. It is usually grounded in the particular texture of specific detail which helps to keep the attention of even reluctant readers. Also, it encourages them to use such detail in their own writing, which helps to counteract the usual breezy generalizations that sweep throughout beginning writing.

Second, there are usually some elements of narrative in autobiography, a form with which students are familiar (from film and television, if not from reading) and therefore comfortable. The fact that narrative itself contains many of the most important elements of composition--a beginning, a middle, an end, a strict sense of progression, cause and effect, proportion, selectivity, balance and theme--works to the advantage of teacher and student. As the form of narrative is easily understood, it becomes a teaching tool whose component parts can be easily demonstrated and analyzed. Furthermore, the narrative is a flexible mode of organization and can be easily combined with most other rhetorical patterns: induction, deduction, comparison/contrast, process analysis, etc.

Third, students find "lives" more interesting than just about anything else; there is an immediate connection with and empathy for the problems of another human being. That these stories are true and not fictions only strengthens them in the students' esteem. Art is suspect, but Truth... well, truth can be trusted. And the particular kind of truth in an autobiographical statement cannot be denied--the truth of the perceptions of the writer exercised on the events of his or her life. The strong authorial voice both compels interest and tenders confidence; it is a voice students will listen to because they know who is speaking.

Fourth, there is inherent in the form of autobiography an implicit purpose which serves the beginning student as stimulus, even inspiration. No one writes an autobiography unless she/he thinks she/he has made a success of his or her life. The teleology of autobiography is of success through struggle, whether that struggle be with self or with circumstance. The teleology of a composition course is (ideally) much the same. Thus, nearly every autobiographer serves the student as a model for self-development, even if the autobiographer has been the most recalcitrant of sinners, a St. Augustine, or an Eldridge Cleaver. All of the authors show, in one form or another, that the process of writing about one's life is also a process of controlling one's life. As the students follow their models, it becomes apparent that the process of controlling one's life is also a process of controlling one's language. When students wish to express with some exactitude the conditions of their existence, they become considerably more alert to the nuances of language because these affect their own verbal image.

So, the form of autobiography is easy to read and interesting for the students, while at the same time instructive about writing in some of the most important ways. One piece of evidence which suggests the success of this kind of writing is the repeated inclusion in composition texts of a small group of essays, all in the first person: Baldwin's "Notes of a Native Son," Orwell's "Shooting an Elephant," Thoreau's "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience," and a few others.

The humanist benefits of reading autobiography reinforce the practical advantages. If students study what human beings have written about themselves, this puts the human experience at the center of the educational process, where, in the tradition of humanism, it belongs. If, while we are teaching students to write, we wish also to inculcate the values of the humanities, no vehicle could be more effective than this one. As I have already pointed out, students read it with interest and empathy, and they accept (perhaps even too easily) the values of the author. The autobiographical form, then, broadens their awareness of other conditions of human existence, other values, and other goals than those they bring with them to class. Whatever the issue, whatever the degree of controversy and whatever the distance from the students' own lives, from human rights to oil rights, material explained in the first person and grounded in experiential detail will involve them more effectively and remain with them longer than any other approach to the same issues. Thus, reading autobiography transmits inherited cultural values as well as serving the practical needs of the writing class.

III

Writing autobiography offers many of the same advantages as reading autobiography. For the student it is interesting and motivating to write; for the instructor it is interesting and rewarding to read.

Putting aside this last advantage as gratuitous, we can consider the perhaps obvious benefits of students interested in investigating their lives and motivated to write about them. It is axiomatic that interested and motivated students produce better essays. Given the insecurity characteristic of this group of students, perhaps even more important, is the authority writing autobiography confers. No one else knows more about the subject than the student writer. This absolutely eliminates all plagiarism (which, I have found, is the result less of laziness than of fear of being wrong). Students cannot plagiarize their own lives and beliefs and would not trust anyone else to do so. This subject is so important that it cannot be trusted to another person's "help." Students may write about their lives effectively or not effectively, but they will not write stupidly, carelessly or fearfully. This in itself is a great boon to the teacher and a self-fulfilling success for the students, since the results will be so much better than anything else they have attempted.

Autobiographical subjects for writing also function as great equalizers for the varied backgrounds from which the students come. Whether the students are young or old, wealthy or indigent, foreign or native, learned or ignorant, all have had a past from which to fashion an autobiography. There can be no "instructor's slant" to this assignment. No race, religion, or political view has the advantage. If the assignment works in favor of anyone, it is the older students, who have somewhat more material in their lives to choose from and who have usually managed to gain a bit of perspective on the incidents in their pasts. If the student's essays are shared, however, this advantage serves the rest of the class as well, as the younger students find the essays of classmates more satisfying writing models than the textbook essays. Watching a visible person struggle through the self-defining process, particularly one who has supposedly achieved the freedom of maturity, is immeasurably encouraging to younger students and reinforces their own efforts.

Autobiographical writing has an additional benefit for the whole class in that it provides amidst variety, a common topic for discussion. In whatever manner their essays are shared, students will be able to recognize common problems in trying to impose a form on the elusive material of a life. In my class, this sharing of essays (through duplicating them and discussing them in small groups) provides some of the most valuable critiques the students' experience. The students' interest in autobiography is intensified when the writer is a classmate. They take seriously their role as critics and they take seriously the evaluations and suggestions offered by the other students. This further strengthens the instructor's critiques. When students hear similar evaluations from several sources, they are much more likely to accept and act on them. Discussion of their own essays (as opposed to those in a text) finds them willing to consider such formal problems as proportion, level of diction, unity, and coherence, problems which are often ill attended when the essays discussed are not their own. Suddenly the problems of selecting the right words become immediate and personal and "relevant," to bring back a word from the sixties. The attention with which they scrutinize each others' work is a model of classroom involvement. The subject of a life seems to be nearly as interesting to other students as it is to the writer.

Writing autobiography also has certain advantages in promoting humanistic values, just as reading autobiography does. First, it encourages self-reflection, an exercise very little pursued by this group of students at this time in their lives. (This fact is undeniable by anyone who teaches at the community college, in spite of what the popular press has to say about the "me" generation.) In the course of self-reflection, one of the things that students gradually come to see is that each life is a process of growth and change, an interaction between the self and its particular society. Students begin to see a difference between the self who is writing (in the present) and the self who is being explained (in the past). They begin to sort out what they have effected in their lives and what has come about as the result of other forces--family, geography, or economic circumstances. In this sorting out of present and past, causes and effects is a budding familiarity with the historical process. That is, a pattern perceived in the present is imposed on material of the past, both of which are controlled by the mind of the writer.

As historical process is discovered to them, albeit unawares, so also may be some philosophic values. In self-reflection there is a sorting out of what is important in a life and an aligning of those important pieces into a pattern of values and principles--principles lived, not principles memorized. This is, of course, the same process that the great autobiographers of the past have undergone, and which makes their works not only interesting historical documents but timeless records of the human mind. Though these students in the community college will probably not develop in one semester the interest in or ability to read the great autobiographies of history, the fact that the students are, however clumsily, repeating the struggles for clarity and coherence contained in those books, both connects them with that past and carries those humanistic values on into the future.

As autobiographical writing begins to develop historical awareness and philosophical speculation, we have already touched on two of the three major subjects of humanities curriculum: the other, of course, is language studies. Writing autobiography requires the writer to present a self to an audience. Selecting and shaping that self is a process not only of self-analysis, but of linguistic skill. Students must study and evaluate, however informally, strategies of self-analysis and self-presentation. In historical models, (even recent ones) they can find some parallels and recognize some models. Writing autobiography and discussing this writing sharpens critical skills as well as writing skills, and brings to students a realization of their connection with and dependence on earlier writing models. This dimension of historical awareness is usually left for more advanced courses in the history of literature, but if the specialized terminology of rhetoric is omitted and if the writing models studied are simple ones, this concept of historical connection can be included without special effort at this beginning level. Writers from the time of Augustine have looked to established models in the process of shaping their own stories; it is an historical corollary of the form, and another dimension of the humanistic tradition.

So, autobiographical writing is interesting and successful for students, and it also helps them to see themselves, their values, and the circumstances of their lives more clearly. They find that telling their stories relieves them of some confusion and some burden of affirming their presence in the class--one might call it the "Ancient Mariner" syndrome. It is a clarifying, enriching and healing act for most of these students who have a limping self-esteem. Once they have told (themselves as much as anyone) who they are, they can much more easily move on to other kinds of writing. It is a sort of fundamental establishment of themselves as writers to say on a typewritten page "This is who I am," and a sort of yeast to the brew of their continued writing.

III

Given the advantage of autobiography as a subject for study and as a focus for writing, it might now be useful to consider the applications of its forms within a class. It is possible to develop a great variety within the form of autobiography: I am going to propose one line of development which I have found successful.

Naturally, one begins with the simple patterns and works toward the more complex. The narrative is, of course, the easiest form for the student to try. As pointed out earlier, however, the narrative is by no means an unsophisticated form, for it requires the students to be coherent, unified, sequential and selective.

Moreover, narrative is not the end but only the beginning of the rhetorical forms that can be developed within autobiography; and for each form there is a corresponding mode of self-apprehension, which, if accurately read by the instructor, will suggest the stage of development of the student's mind.

For example, most students begin to write by giving a simple account of something that happened "to" them. When that something stops acting on them, whether it be a bicycle, a parent, or a wave, the "story" will end. At this stage they are aware of themselves as being acted upon but not as acting themselves. Their lives are perceived primarily as a series of events--rites of passage, celebrations, accidents--without much order, meaning, or consequence. Certainly they are not aware of themselves as controlling the direction or determining the values in their lives.

This initial and simple stage of self-apprehension can be deepened if the students are asked to write about an "accomplishment." While this assignment may still be presented as a straightforward narrative, students become aware of themselves as acting on and, to some degree, controlling their lives. More than likely the students will use a cause/effect organization in this piece of writing, showing that their efforts at practicing something produced a satisfying result or that trying something before they were ready resulted in disaster. The "accomplishment" assignment also suggests to the students that somewhere, either at the beginning or at the end of the paper, there should be a statement about just what was accomplished. If this is included, we find that students have imposed either a deductive or inductive pattern on the narrative.

The next step encourages the students to move from an "accomplishment" to a "discovery." In this sort of progression, students begin to deal with internal achievements (such as insights, determinations, and control over emotions) as well as the external. They may use the assignment to relate the discovery, to clarify the discovery, or as a means of actually making the discovery. At this point students become aware of writing as a tool for finding out what they think, or writing as a means of thought as well as an expression of thought. That is a tremendous amount of conceptual growth in only three writing assignments--from narration of simple sequence to cause and effect connections within the framework of an inductive or deductive pattern, and from passive observations to realization of accomplishments to an exploration of the distinction between external and internal achievements. They have moved from the percepts of experience to the concepts of creative thought, and from writing as a tool which reflects their reality to writing as a tool which discovers their reality.

Remarkable as this progress is, it is only the beginning of what can be done with personal writing.

For example, if the students are asked to write about a relationship, new writing patterns will naturally develop out of this assignment. First, the students will be coaxed away from narrative to another form of organization--illustration, definition, analysis, comparison/contrast, or whatever they need to render the relationship clearly and satisfactorily. The students become aware that there is more than one person acting in this relationship; there are two or more people interacting, which complicates the pattern considerably. Further, most relationships are long term affairs, and so the students must condense several years into a few paragraphs, which is much more difficult than compressing an event of a few hours or even a few days. In the discussion of a relationship, the organization will very likely take as guideposts qualities rather than events, which requires students to explore and illustrate ideas as well as facts, i.e. to think analytically as well as describe concretely.

Other forms of exposition, and other modes of autobiography can be explored by other writing assignments. Students can explain reasons for their beliefs, attitudes or changes, in the time-honored mode of the confession. They can defend their preferences and prejudices in the manner of the apologia, or they can defend in a different sense their vulnerable inner lives by creating roles or masks projecting the way they wish to be seen.[1] They can argue for a political, intellectual, or social position based on their own hard-wrought experience. Any and all of these writing tasks will challenge them to explore new forms of writing while still grounding their essays in material that is familiar and important to them.

Literary as well as expository possibilities exist within this form also. Each year, a few of my students chose to experiment with it. Usually, without my direction or any written models from their readings, one or two students will turn in an exploration of an interior state of mind, much in the manner of a story by Virginia Woolf, and written for the sake of the exploration rather than for the sake of any discovery or change that comes out of it. (This is a somewhat more sophisticated stage of the third assignment I discussed, on "discoveries.") While I do not assign such experiments as these in a freshman composition course (they might be more appropriate for creative writing) they nonetheless regularly if infrequently turn up, suggesting that some students are psychologically ready for and interested in a more complex type of writing than the standard autobiographical forms. Recognizing this, an instructor can easily offer such students more challenging assignments for the duration of the course. Such experiments are worth sharing with the rest of the class, for this kind of writing done by a classmate impresses the students much more than if it had been done by Virginia Woolf or James Joyce, and greatly expands their ideas about what writing is and of what they as writers can do. Even if they will not be required to read or write in this style as dental technicians or engineers, it makes them aware of dimensions in language they have never before considered.

IV

Any of these experiments in autobiographical writing are valuable exercises for indicating to the instructor the state of the student's mental development, as well as for encouraging the student's own skill, confidence and clarity of vision. Once students can assign order, meaning, and direction to even a small segment of their lives, they have enough control to explore, progress, and accomplish in other types of writing. Moreover, they become eager to write, for they have discovered that they have something of their own to say, a reason for saying it and an audience for whom to say it well.

Therefore, after students have demonstrated an ease and an ability to write in the autobiographical mode, the instructor wishes to encourage them to write in other forms as a complement and counterbalance to the personal writing, one would wish to make this transition without losing the authority, directness, and immediacy personal writing has offered. I will suggest three ways I have found to do this without sacrificing the continuity of the class or the quality of the students' writing.

The first way constructs a bridge between their lives and the material they have ready. I ask the students to connect anything in their lives with any of the autobiographical essays in the text. This assignment requires them to draw parallels between their lives and the life of a person they know only through print, by recognizing a similarity of circumstance, of character, of attitude, etc. It is a major step toward an intellectual connection with the world of history, literature and ideas conveyed through the written word. The discoveries the students make are often startling and always original, gratifying to the teacher and the student as the beginnings of analytic thought. In this writing assignment, since it is partially based on "objective" material, one can enter into an evaluation of the logic as well as the style of the writing. The form of the writing, though it develops naturally out of the parallels recognized, will usually emerge as a comparison/contrast format, which the students may not yet have tried. Thus, there will be certain formal elements, of both content and organization, which will unify all the writing attempts and provide the basis for discussion at a more challenging intellectual level than the previous assignments.

A second successful approach to expository writing that is still grounded in the personal and immediate allows the students to analyze another member of the class in order to help improve his or her writing. In a one-to-one situation, where both students know each other, the writer recognizes a clear purpose and audience for this assignment and is still able to speak in the first person with the authority bestowed by familiarity with the other person's writing. If the class has been sharing essays all along (which, as I have mentioned above, has numerous benefits), then the assignment to critique the writing of a fellow student is only a natural extension of group discussions. These discussions will have built the writer's confidence in his or her powers of analysis. Because of this prior experience at critiquing, the writer brings to this assignment the same authority which she/he has been writing about his or her own life. Further, there is a clear reason and a clear consequence for the essay. By helping another student recognize features of his or her writing, the function of the analysis is made immediate and concrete.

The "reality" of this writing assignment is an additional motivation. The assignment is valuable not only to the writer, but also to the critic. It usually reinforces the suggestions of the instructor (which have been made privately and in writing, not verbally and to the group) and provides a more tangible and lasting piece of evaluation than the discussions have given.

Students must have had exposure to about three papers by another student to begin to recognize stylistic features of that writing. But if these papers have been discussed separately in class, the writer has no trouble linking them and identifying the emerging patterns. From my experience with this assignment, I can testify that it is enormously successful.

The third suggestion I have for sustaining the interest and power of personal writing, while moving into "objective" subjects, is to give the students a long piece of autobiographical writing, preferably a complete book, and ask them to write on this subject. By entering into what is in effect another one-to-one relationship (though this time with a person they can know only through his or her writing), students are able to sustain the same interest in a life and the same connection with the person about whom they are writing as they were with the assignment just discussed.

The types of writing assignments which can grow out of this reading are unlimited--from simple (or not so simple) summaries of the autobiography, to analysis of the author or the style, to research on the person and/or book. What is more important than the particular kinds of writing attempted (which will in any case be governed by the type of author and material in the book) is to give the students enough of the writing of a single person so that they can become familiar with its form, style, and point of view. As with essays evaluating the writing of other students, the student writer must have a certain quantity of words before she/he can begin to see the patterns, and a single essay is not enough.

The reading and thoughtful consideration of a complete autobiography by each student may be supplemented by reading and discussion of one or more autobiographies by the whole class. This leads naturally to a consideration of generic forms or, in simpler words, to thinking about what makes a good autobiography. By the time students have written parts of their own autobiographies, read segments of autobiographies from perhaps twenty persons, plus one or more full length books, they have a firm understanding of what makes an autobiography good. When I ask them to rate the autobiographies they have read according to some principles of excellence, they come up with many of the same qualities that the leading critics of autobiography have listed: a sense of the essence of the person, a sense of completeness to the life, a sincerity and openness in tone, a structural principle, a clear sense of audience, a vivid prose style. Most of these qualities every writing teacher tries to instill in her students. These students come to recognize and to "own" these critical principles, through using them, not just through hearing about them.

It is a long road to this point when the class as a whole can discuss an abstract concept such as form, but it is not, let me stress, a tedious one. It is marked by a sense of accomplishment and the developing awareness of their potential at every step of the way. The essays are consistently interesting and more carefully thought out than even the most provocative list of teacher-invented assignments could possibly stimulate. There is a sense of personal growth, a sifting of values as well as a honing of writing skills. Humane values are transmitted both through the readings and the writings with an immediacy not quickly laid aside. Applying their developing skills and perceptions to situations that are right in front of them and helping another student write a better essay brings a refreshed--or perhaps newborn--belief in the power and efficacy of language, particularly their own language.

In short, autobiography is a great motivator and an expediter of the learning process in English composition.

It instills confidence and incentive in students who have little of either. It prompts them to consider philosophic values and historical process as well as experiment with basic patterns of writing. If the students use these intellectual paradigms largely unaware of their significance, the exercises will nonetheless prepare them for later encounters with the history of thought. The genre of autobiography is an effective vehicle for expression of history, social values, aesthetic form, and linguistic skills all because it seems simply to be a story of one person's life. It does not preach so much as simply converse; it does not come attached with a label of high culture, but rather with a label of truth, which the students feel they can trust. Autobiography is one means of integrating the students' education with their lives and of allowing a skills class to become a humanities class, in a humane way.

NOTES

[1] The creation of a mask is a legitimate if unusual autobiographical activity, as evidenced by writers such as Gibbon, who screen and protect their inner selves this way. A person needs considerable skill to write a convincing mask, and often those students who attempt this form are among the better writers as well as the more sophisticated thinkers in the class. They are aware of the distinction between the self or selves inside the writer, and the selective projection of the self on the page. When they choose to defend their privacy by projecting a deliberately chosen role, they will often embellish this role with humor and vivid description, deflecting with entertainment the curiosity of their peers. This strategy is effective for the class as well as the individual, for it demonstrates to the class the art involved in self-depiction, and the importance of tone, perspective, detail, and authorial control in a way that the simpler, "sincere" autobiographical essays do not. The class is usually quick to detect a role as role and can discuss the writing formally while respecting the privacy of the author.

LEARNING TO WRITE SENTENCE BY SENTENCE: A MODULAR APPROACH TO ENGLISH COMPOSITION

PETER L. SHARKEY

I

Beginning with the false optimism which characterizes most surveys about language skill problems, let us pretend that most of us agree on the following easy conclusions facing community college teachers today:

(1) Students often exhibit an inability to organize their ideas coherently and develop them in writing and speech.

(2) Students cannot read with care, precision, and comprehension.

No one situation can be pinpointed as the cause of these language deficiencies. Although we know that a major factor in successful use of language skills is frequent exercise of those skills, too few individuals have experience in careful reading and writing or in reading with precision and comprehension. It cannot be doubted that the influence of television has been pervasive, with a consequent decline in reading and writing. As the attitude of the American public toward the importance of language proficiency has changed, the opportunity to hear eloquent speech and to read well-written works of English literature has become increasingly unavailable. Education, too, must bear its share of the blame for the deficiencies observed in the American public. For too long there has been an unwillingness on the part of educational institutions to recognize that the quality of communication has been declining and that changes are necessary.

If, then, these are common, central concerns of the community college, the following general goals for upgrading language skills should leap readily to mind:

(1) Developing within students the desire to improve language skills.

(2) Requiring constant exercise of reading, writing and speaking and expecting all disciplines to attend carefully to these skills by written and verbal comment.

(3) Integrating language skills in all courses, whether technical, vocational, or general education.

Any community college program designed to address these goals should reach as broad a spectrum of the college population as possible. A number of approaches can be used to meet the varying needs of a disparate student body. However, any program should include a procedure to measure the minimum language skill level that will be acceptable for all community college graduates.

These are reasonable goals which could be effected in a variety of ways without unnaturally reversing the direction of most community colleges. But since such discussions about change must take place within the communities which can support implementation, we will not be surprised to hear different versions of the problem with different conclusions and recommendations.

One institutional response to these concerns is a program offered at the College of Marin (California). "Learning to Write Sentence by Sentence" is a curriculum designed to promote increased student awareness of quality in communication and concentrated exercise in writing; by implication, it suggests a model for adaptation to other disciplines, to other programs, and to other institutions. It contains both those elements which are universal to all language proficiency programs and those which are unique to this particular campus setting.

This course of study is designed for the student who is about to try his hand at the expository essay. It assumes that the student is an individual who has something to say and relies heavily upon the desire of the student to find out if this is the case within the special confines of a course of study. It proceeds to challenge the student to write at a college level, lest the essays which he produces in time become childishly correct in grammar and stupefyingly uninteresting. The course is not designed to "cool out" the student who secretly knows that he should not be at college; it is offered to the student who has always felt that his writing is indeed a mirror of his intellect but has known neither where to place the reflector in relation to himself and the light of the outside world nor how to maintain its natural luster. From the start, this course expects the student to regard the full image of his mind in ambitious word structures--full statements which may be shaped into grammatical predications. Furthermore, it assumes that the student has thought in sentences at some point in his life, even if he has not written so before, and that he must not be discouraged from composing in sentence-like structures before he knows the grammar to do so correctly and consistently.

This course stresses the fact that meaning lies curled up in metaphors, something like the buds of a rose, which open up in the proper conditions. Values are tightly clustered and enfoliated in these buds of perception and language. When we communicate them in writing to others, our responsibility is to create a verbal context, the sentence in this case, which has the conditions for finding, adopting, and creating structures which suit our "value kernels" and conduct their growth. Our verbal structures are images of these value systems.

Since the sentence always has at least one grammatical nucleus, the central predication, it stands to reason that the writer should try to center his writing in the buds of his perceived values. Bringing his main idea into the center of his sentence emphatically focuses and expands the field of the reader's vision. Saying what we mean then, in one sense, means ordering this predication in an emphatic, unself-conscious manner. In describing architecture, for instance, one's choice of details is pulled toward some central interest that is being evaluated. The details begin to spin centripetally about the nucleus of predication -- something like a whirlpool or a galaxy. It goes without saying that learning to read trial sentences and drafts is as much an exercise in discovering and focusing viewpoints as it is a worrying over spelling, and punctuation. These operations become more and more integrated with practice.

Thinking in sentences, free of the pressure to snap out something clever on the spot, one rotates the buds of value in the sunlight of memories and cares. Nevertheless, the thunder and lightning of spoken outbursts and the fogs and showers of conversations have a perfect right, in fact, an honored place, in essays. How drab longer pieces of writing would be without the human touch of real speech to relieve the intellectual statement. To learn about the differences between written predication and conversation is to realize that introducing the "real world" of speech into compositions is a matter of making literary choices related purely to allowing ideas to flower and grow.

This self-paced course forces the student to think before writing and does so in a rather muscular, uncomprising and unpatronizing way. The instructions within units have a rhetorical and complicated bent. The first unit, for instance, offers material which is in itself irresistable but is wrapped in a fairly difficult cover to test the student's initial will to engage and consult. The progressive structure and tone of the units is calculated to make the student hazard verbal images of the self which he can master within the conventional grammar presently under consideration. To make too much of the conventions before the act of conceiving "something to say" is to prescribe imitative form upon a mind which must be taught gradually that grammatical syntax is indeed a natural good.

It is also no longer safe nor wise to assume that any student who elects to learn about sentences before writing expository essays has just left a bone-head grammar class or a production-line high school. The profile of current community college enrollments argues that teachers and their courses must be ready and willing to meet an incredibly diverse student body on its own individual grounds and to be sensitive to its different backgrounds and needs. This self-paced course can afford to preserve standards while customizing instruction.

What follows is a part of the student portion of that modular curriculum, "Learning to Write Sentence By Sentence." It contains the general introduction, the course of study, a sample of one predication unit, and an outline of subsequent Predication units for a student reader. Each unit stresses one concept and includes objectives, assignments, discussions, suggested supplementary work and a posttest.

II

LEARNING TO WRITE SENTENCE BY SENTENCE

An Introduction

Good college writing is not the art of making verbs agree with subjects, or the art of avoiding comma splices, or even the art of being original. These are subordinate arts which have a contribution to make to good writing, but they are not its essence. Good writing is effective and accurate communication. A good writer must in the first place have something to say. But he is a writer because he can transfer that "something," which originally exists only in his imagination, into the imagination of other people with a minimum amount of cooperation upon their part. This transfer cannot, of course, be direct; it must be achieved by the manipulation of arbitrary symbols, words, written on paper. Successful writing is an astonishing achievement when it is considered closely, and the student who expects to master the art without a lot of effort is very foolish indeed.

But what do we mean by "something to say"? Perhaps once in a thousand instances, outside an English composition class, we really want to communicate a simple "something." We want to describe the Grand Canyon or a friend or a concert. Perhaps we want to narrate, to explain the order in which particular events took place. We might want to describe the sequence of events which led to our being busted, mistakenly, for selling grass. We might want to send to a friend at another college our recipe for crepes or home brew (recipes are really a kind of narrative). In such instances it is possible that what you want to communicate is a simple term, a noun, modified by appropriate qualifiers.

But it is unlikely. Even in the instances given above, it is probably that what you really want to communicate is not a modified noun but a sentence. If you should be interrupted in your writing, for instance, by your roommate wanting to know what you are doing, you might reply, "I am writing to the judge about my arrest." Here, "about my arrest" is a simple noun subject. But you would surely mean, "I am writing to the judge to explain that the sequence of events which led to my arrest clearly proves that it was a case of mistaken identity." In other words, your real intention would not be properly represented by a noun; your real intention would be properly summarized in a sentence.

Some General Concepts and Goals

Since all of the basic principles of composition operate in composing a sentence, the following course of study will stress that a good sentence, like a good essay or a good book, requires a reasoned organization, a point of view, a consistent and appropriate tone, form, and diction. Put in an ideal light, our goal is to achieve good correspondence between the sentence you compose and the act of thinking or imagining which it seeks to convey. To describe our goal in simplest terms is to foster simple-minded, uninteresting, timid, and mechanical scribbling. Let's put our goal another way: you must try to compose accurate sentences whose structures reflect and embody their theses and which have an emphatic tone and point of view. There, given "something to say," the form and sense should come together in a good sentence. This course of study will teach you an attractive, albeit unnerving, variety of approaches to this end. You must be ready sometimes to walk through a field of eggs and at other times in pastures of waving grain. The purpose of this introduction has been to give you poise and confidence at the starting line; it has been written deliberately to make you read it slowly and thoughtfully. You will be warned again and again that the craft of forceful writing cannot be practiced well without the art of critical, perceptive reading - of both your own work and that of others.

Resources, Materials, and Connections

To take this course you will need:

1. The units themselves, completed in order, one at a time.
2. The Manual.[1]
3. A good portable dictionary.
4. A tutor who can be consulted on a weekly basis at a regular hour.

Learning Activities

The learning activities prescribed in each unit are quite similar. Careful reading of the text of the unit and exhaustive study and memorization of rules in The Manual are absolutely necessary. Specimens from student compositions are to be rewritten as prescribed. Identifications of grammatical distinctions are frequently demanded. The dictionary will be needed periodically. Quizzes are sometimes given to prove your mastery over various technical points of grammar and punctuation. You will be requested from time to time to compile lists of terms and concepts gathered from the "outside world" of newspapers, television, and conversation. And most of all, since this is a course in writing, you will be expected to compose a variety of statements on some fairly interesting topics.

General Goals of the Predication Units

In the following five units you will be asked to compose a series of descriptive sentences about a variety of subjects. You will analyze your own work as well as similar work of other students, and you will re-write extensively. In writing and re-writing, the general goals will be to produce an accurate sentence which is correct in grammar, punctuation, spelling, and capitalization. It must also embody some particular point of view towards its subject -- a reason for remarking upon it and "something to say" about it -- although this need be no more than a strong impression such as "Isn't it beautiful?" or "Isn't it ugly?" You should not tie up your tongue at first trying to be too stylish; you will have plenty of opportunities at the right times to call on the muses of artistic inspiration who, given half a chance to operate in a reasonably neat setting, turn out to be surprisingly liberal with their "graces."

The Course of Study

This composition course has three major sections which are designed to be studied in order. They are Predication, Language, and Syntax. The units within the sections must be taken one at a time in sequence. The timing and order of the assignments must be honored because the experience is essentially a condensed version of a much longer and far more leisurely course of study (a lifetime of reading and writing). This is not to say that you must not work laterally on other writing or grammar projects which you might happen upon at the same time. Heaven forbid that your browsing, investigating, or reading through the materials should be cut off by some irrational compulsion to "grind out" a certain unit. But the course does make sense in its present order. It is possible, however, once you have worked your way down the road of predication assignments, to work simultaneously on parts of the language and syntax units.

Since you are relatively free to work at your own pace, the language section of the course will offer you the best opportunity to make tracks because it entails more routine work and memorization than the others. Assignments and quizzes have been designed to bring your mechanical grammar skills up to scratch while you are doing parallel writing assignments. The Predication Units, however, must be done first and in a rather strictly prescribed order. You will understand this regimen better as you advance.

As you finish units or parts of units, be sure to save all of the writing which you do because it will be used again in subsequent assignments. Let's learn to write sentence by sentence one step at a time.

Predication Unit 1 Accurate and Emphatic Description

*To recognize the simple sentence.
*To correct sentence fragments.
*To make subjects and verbs agree.
*To correct spelling and capitalization errors.
*To identify key metaphors.
*To improve central predications.
*To evaluate point of view.
*To compose an accurate descriptive sentence in which the grammar, spelling, and capitalization are correct and the point of view is clearly and emphatically expressed.

Assignment: Compose a sentence of at least twenty-five words which describes the hills around the college.

The enterprise of writing reveals constantly how well we know and control what we think. When we sit down to compose a simple description, the words that we select communicate what is on our minds at just that moment of writing. If we have sorted out our subject from other pressing interests, such as the temperature of the classroom and last night's encounter, the words will much more likely reflect thoughts exclusively about our subject. Our lives should make our writing more discriminating. The very act of composition helps us to be more thoughtful. Sometimes we are so distracted by other interests (My car is running in a tow-away zone by the chem. lab!) that it takes at least one draft just to make us realize how far away we are mentally from the specific task of thinking before us. In short, we often drag much more into the pictures which our words create than is appropriate to our writing purpose. Given only a few words with which to identify and characterize the hills in all of their geographical and atmospheric complexity, our verbal attention is tested to the limit. How can we make our feelings about ourselves and about our perceptions into an accurate and interesting verbal portrayal of the reality of the hills themselves for a reader who has little personal or sympathetic interest in us? How do we go about identifying and adjusting our viewpoint as writers?

Perhaps it will help to analyze how other student writers have acted in the same situation. Let's test a few examples for concentration, accuracy, liveliness and control. This first example was obviously written on the first day of class after a leisurely summer vacation:

> The calmness of a densely wooded hillside is disturbed only by a young runner, barefooted, who is late to class.

The advent of school, with all the assignments and pressures, is at war with this writer's summer, and the little sentence proves to be his battleground.

But before we discard this honest effort as a refusal to describe in detail the hills themselves as assigned, let's discuss it from a more limited compositional point of view. How would you describe the relationship between the form of his sentence (especially the order in which things have been presented for our consideration) and the writer's viewpoint? What are the key words which present ideas? Does the writer feature and develop ideas? Is the runner near or far? Does it matter? Is this an accurate picture of the hills? What literary touches do you perceive?

Since running late to class was still on our writer's mind as he wrote, his appreciation of the calm of the hills, which is obviously more appropriate for his writing purpose, did not have a chance to develop. His perception of the objective reality has been diverted, and so his verbal description has been shaped accordingly. Despite his mental preoccupation, the grammatical form of the sentence does communicate a feeling of completeness, a sense of purposeful movement from one place to another. The featured quality of the hills is indeed the grammatical subject of the sentence; the rest of the statement dramatizes a contrast which draws our attention away from the subject of the assignment. For whatever it is worth, we have a story rather than a picture.

The next example was written by a student who grabbed up his writing materials and flew from the classroom the moment he heard the assignment. Although we never learn why escape was uppermost in his mind at that moment of composition, it certainly affects his description:

> Tree tops reaching up to the Heavens--over proud and inviting--teasing one to venture into the hill's vast domain--beginning with only low curves then rising ever steeper to culminate at a little shack.

When asked to describe the hills, which were quite familiar to him, why did he have to run outdoors at once for a first-hand, pulsing inspiration? Had he no confidence in the relative quiet of his memory and thought as a source for telling details and a conceptual frame for his picture? Or was he merely uncomfortable in class?

Psychological speculation aside, we read that his "tree tops" appear to be "reaching," "inviting" and "teasing," which indicates a fairly common projection of his own desires upon inanimate nature. The trees have become characters in the little nature theater of his description. Certain kinds of accuracy are sacrificed to such heart-pounding enthusiasm, regardless of its sincerity. Striking vistas in nature should excite and move us deeply, but if such unbridled, open sentiment gives rise to travelogue language such as "vast domain" and "even steeper," it is probably unconvincing. For all the huffing and puffing, it is impossible to know from the statement as it stands what or who is "beginning." The laws of time, space and grammar have been suspended as the writer throws his perceptions emotionally around the scene. His words follow a line of vision that blurs and then returns to focus with a bump on an improbable detail--the shack. The main theme is "desire" which the repetition of dramatic language conveys. We are left with a mystery about the relevancy of emotion.

Here is another selection which raises questions about the purpose of describing the frame of the writer's perception:

> A mountain woman, oblivious to all going on around her, a sleeping princess awaiting the lover's kiss.

While "tree tops" brought us shaking into a hyperactive world of vivid, uncontrolled perception and emotion, "a mountain woman" withdraws just as suddenly into a memorial or literary world of shadowy legends and vague make-believes. Beside the fact that Mt. Tamalpais is only one of the many hills around the college (so long, accuracy), or that it looks like a sleeping maiden only from one particular and distant point of view, the legend of the sleeping princess is the privileged information of rather few Marin inhabitants. This description leans rather heavily upon an external, literary crutch, and it must appear, therefore, to be incomplete and private, perhaps even cute, to a majority of common readers who honestly expect an accurate description. Describing the hills as a reclining woman might prove effective if we could make the reader see some details, but we must bear in mind that his "imaginative" approach will inevitably restrict the writer's viewpoint to only a part of the scene. Such are the dangers of a sudden retreat into an "artsy closet." So snug is the legend in our writer's memory that the reference to it momentarily protects him from the assignment. This description and the previous one reveal two extreme kinds of subjective response to a request for a serious verbal version of pondered experience. It requires more awareness of what we think than we might have supposed at the outset.

So busy have we been trying to untangle and decode the last two efforts at describing the hills that we failed to notice that neither were grammatical sentences. Absence of emotional focus and mental framing often results in fragmentary verbal constructions. Let's pause for a moment to review a few basic grammatical requirements for sentences and also to acquire some more technical tools for handling verbal structures. Read and study the following brief passages in The Manual. Then complete the illustrative exercises found within these pages:

Chapter 1	Simple Sentence	pp. 1-6
Chapter 8	Fragment	pp. 46-51
Chapter 9	Predication	pp. 52-57
Chapter 13	Subject/Verb Agreement	pp. 75-81

If you still have doubts about your mastery of these basic distinctions and definitions after wrestling with The Manual, go over your exercises with a tutor. It will be impossible to advance in our progressive course of study without absolute mastery over these fundamentals of grammar.

Now you are ready to examine the relationship between grammatical structure, point of view and expressive emphasis in the selection of descriptions on the next page. Each should be treated as a little essay on the hills. Read them analytically, underlining once the simple subject and twice the main verb of each sentence or of each independent clause within each sentence. Correct the errors of spelling and capitalization which divide our reading attention. Keep the dictionary at your side. Chase every rabbit that moves. Does the statement stand on its own two feet? Is it grammatically complete? Has it a subject and predicate? Do you feel the need to add something to or delete from it? Finally, is it true?

Also, since our reading together has been concentrating upon the particular ways each writer has been looking at the hills, what I have been calling "point of view," you will find your own analysis of "where the writer is coming from" much easier if you will note the two or three most striking or emphatic words in each sentence. Identify these words with a circle and try to figure out whether the writer introduced them accidentally in the heat of the assignment or coolly and strategically as an act of composition. Contemplate the relationship of the writer's ideas and his predication.

Student Samples:

1. Tree Tops reaching up the Heavens--over proud and inviting--teasing one to venture into the hill's vast domain--beginning with only low curves then rising ever-steeper to culminate at a little shack.

2. A mountain woman, oblivious to all going on around her, a sleeping princess awaiting the lover's kiss.

3. The calmness of a densly wooded hillside is disturbed only by a young runner, bare footed who is late to class.

4. When I look out the windows at the hills surrounding the college I see Mt. Tamampais towering above everything below as though it were a mother watching over her children.

5. Mt. Tamalpais and the surrounding hills, in their majesty, oversee the college as if they were the king and his court protecting their subjects.

6. To gaze upon the majic mountian defussed in swrilling green of dence foliage, earie but seen through a maze of barren tenicals reaching from the trees near by, paints an eary but majestic panorama.

7. My inward parts move through the rythem of these hills which exist in mind's eye and the gentle spirit that so forms an everlasting image of peach, tranquility, and love.

8. His books forgotten for the moment, the student drifts in dreamy fantasy on the school-lawn grass, his eyes gazing half-attentively at the image of the distant hills, their velvety-brown chapparal spreading up the sides like caressing fingers in the strong, lazy heat.

9. The hills surrounding the college are covered with tire tracks and footprints and dump trucks and bodies and spit and cigarette butts and concrete walls and signs that say "authorized personnel only" and stairs and dogs, and sometimes, if you look hard, you can see grass and ivy and trees.

10. In the wind torn purple mountains of the Rockies, in the greatest gray waters of the ocean storm, in the burned red loneliness if Arizona deserts, do I yet yearn for the passive pink sunsets singing the glories that announce the green hills of Marin.

11. Mt. Tam is the beautiful, green "sleeping lady" overlooking the College of Marin-Kentfield area, the Mill Valley area, and the coastal range of Marin County.

12. The comforting, familiar, but thirsty hills that surround College of Marin are finally receiving their long awaited drink which is turning the hard crumbly earth to rich brown mud.

13. As we the aspiring students of this college, look around our surroundings at the school, we can see to one side a high spreading range of evergreens covering mountains peak, while on the other side of the spreading campus we have a rolling, almost barren looking, wind-swept hill, covered with wild flowing wheat.

14. Rising like a green pyramid from the top of the Student Union Building Mt. Tam commands the viewers attention with the lower tree-studded hills paying homage to it like slaves to their master.

Let's work on one together just to get the hand of it.

> (When I look out the windows at the hills surrounding the college) I see Mt. Tamalpais towering above everything below as though it were a mother watching over her children.

Sometimes the overture and curtain-raising become more important than the show itself. The self-conscious wind-up (I look, I see) presents a false, or superficial point of view--an unnecessarily polite side-note concerning time and place. That is not to say that a writer should never use "I" to present an idea, but there is no point in shining the spotlight upon yourself only to duck back behind the curtain. Because "I see" is the central predication (the grammatical lever which controls the balance and movement of the entire sentence) a dramatic contrast exists between "I," the writer (subject), and "towering" Tamalpais (object), a contrast which is far less interesting and more superficial than the forceful "idea" which follows. Should we have to wade through such mind mechanics to get to the writer's chief idea--a towering, protective mother? Our writer senses a dramatic comparison--a metaphor--between the mountain as tower/mother and the hills/college/students as her children, but he is too timid to state it forthrightly. What if we helped him by rewriting slightly, by moving the commanding metaphor (towering) into the driver's seat of the sentence, into the subject/verb position of predication:

> Mount Tamalpais towers above the hills and college below as though it were a mother watching over her children who return her caring looks from the windows of our classroom.

You may wish to "finetune" the second half of this sentence to make it more expressive of our writer's thesis which points a special contrast between nature and man.

Each of the sentences which we have before us for study is strikingly individual despite hackneyed and trite phrases which distort particulars and ruin the overall effect. Each typically formulates its viewpoint in a self-organizing manner which challenges our attention. In discovering where one writer's thought runs off the track, we may also find an unexpected resource of memory or feeling which needs rerouting within the little world of the descriptive sentence. How curious it is to behold the transormation of a time-worn term such as "majesty," for instance, into an appropriate servant of the "regal" point of view of the following sentence:

> Mt. Tamalpais and the surrounding hills, in their majesty, oversee the college as if they were the king and his court protecting their subjects.

Once again, a metaphor commands the writer's field of vision which has been efficiently shaped into the conceptual frame for his assertion. Once we have detected the regal comparison between the mountain and the king, the hierarchical contrast between regent and subjects clicks neatly into place.

As we proceed together through this course of study, you will learn to recognize point of view and thesis (a more narrow or efficient version of viewpoint) by their syntactical forms: contrast, comparison, enumeration, definition, cause and effect. You will be able to trace your way quickly and directly from the key metaphors and terms as they appear (within and without the conventionally critical positions of the sentence) to an identification and grasp of the idea expressed by the writer--who is usually yourself! The ecology bias of sentence number 9, for example, which is based upon a sentimental contrast, will announce itself to you through the writer's confusion of grammatical parts; the topographical distancing of number 13 and the geographical pedantry of number 10 will come into focus; the vague kind of sensuality expressed in numbers 6 and 8 will be easier to handle; and the triumphs of 12 and 14 will make great sense.

After you have digested all of this and worked over the sentences, perhaps even discussed them with your tutor or grandmother, being always sure to stop short of exhaustion and grubby nitpicking, select two sentences which you like well enough to rewrite. Try to bring their points of view into emphatic line with their grammatical form. Reorganize their predication if necessary. Try to preserve the integrity of the original, but don't be afraid to add touches of your own which will increase their clarity and beauty. Now, also rewrite sentences 6 and 8. See if you can eliminate, or at least reduce, their emotional theaters.

When you have finished this rather demanding process, turn in your completed Predication Unit 1. Each sentence should have 1) its predications and 2) metaphors or similes identified with the appropriate lines and circles. If your identifications are not up to snuff, your tutor will ask to see 3) your work in The Manual. Finally, you must turn in 4) your rewritten sentences which will require, of course, your greatest effort and care. It is good policy and practice from the outset to do the recommended exercises, if for no other reason than to become familiar with the critical, descriptive vocabulary which will be used throughout our course of study--even if you are a whiz at grammar. When you turn in your completed unit, you will receive in return your original sentence with some corrections and suggestions. You must then rewrite and resubmit it. When this work is satisfactorily finished, you may go on to the thrills and chills of Predication Unit 2.

Here, then, is a brief checklist of Predication Unit 1:

A. Compose a sentence which describes the hills.

B. 1. Identify the main subjects and verbs in each of the 14 sentences.

  2. Identify the two or three key metaphors in each.

  3. Do the assigned exercises in The Manual.

  4. Rewrite sentences 6 and 8 plus two of your own choosing.

C. Rewrite your own original sentence.

D. Post-test: Compose a new sentence of at least 25 words which describes the hills around the college.

When you have received a satisfactory grade for this work, you are qualified for the next unit of study.

Subsequent Predication Units

Each of the four remaining Predication Units continue in this pattern. Each focuses on an increasingly complex concept, making the units both sequential and cumulative in nature.

Predication Unit 2 Expanded and Reinforced Viewpoint

*To recognize dependent clauses.

*To correct spelling and punctuation errors.
*To compare independent and dependent clauses.
*To identify modifiers, connectives, and expansions.
*To build complex sentences.
*To rewrite predication for emphasis.
*To evaluate the role of metaphors in sentences.
*To compose an accurate descriptive sentence in which the grammar, spelling, and capitalization are correct and the point-of-view is emphatically expressed within the central predication and clearly articulated in the modifying details of the whole.

Predication Unit 3 Order and Movement

*To identify the form of verbs.
*To correct faulty parallelism.
*To achieve parallel order in giving instructions.
*To prepare the reader to follow instructions.
*To improve sentence movement.
*To compose a descriptive sentence in which the verbs are appropriately and emphatically aligned to present clearly a sequence of related actions.

Predication Unit 4 Compounding Statements

*To identify compound sentences.
*To memorize connectives.
*To recognize logical functions of connectives.
*To construct compound sentences using coordinating conjunctions and conjunctive adverbs.
*To convert compound sentences.
*To compose a longer descriptive sentence which uses subordination and coordination to develop logical relationships between concepts and actions.

Predication Unit 5 Agency and Context

*To recognize cause and effect.
*To correct faulty predication.
*To identify sentence patterns whicn use "to be."
*To convert "to be" predications.
*To build verbal modifiers.
*To emphasize agency.
*To limit context.
*To compose predications which accurately and emphatically report the relationships between the causes, circumstances, and secondary consequences of an event.

III

"Learning to Write Sentence by Sentence" is only one part of a campus-wide effort to improve language skills. Although the main responsibility for establishing standards and maintaining them among students fell to the English faculty, all teachers were encouraged to recognize standards in their assignments and to provide opportunities for students to exercise writing skills throughout the curriculum. Fewer machine-graded exams and more essays and essay exams were recommended. In order to achieve this, teaching assistants and student readers were trained by the English faculty and assigned to various departments; a central tutorial manual was composed which could be used campus-wide; degree requirements were revised; diagnostic exams were rewritten and various ad hoc remedial courses devised. Progress in writing skills increased substantially through opportunities to exercise them throughout the curriculum. But without the cooperation of the entire college community, this progress could not be made.

This program does keep the humanities at the center of arguments about the goals and means of remediation. It can be used as a model for humanities curricula which includes remediation and denies its usual tangential status. This particular remedial writing course incorporates assumptions and skills necessary for humanistic education: a belief in the worth of the individual, an expectation for the best use of skills and abilities, a belief in language as creator and reflector of thought, and an emphasis upon logical and disciplined study. It is the heart of a coordinated effort throughout the community college curriculum. Humanistic literacy asks this kind of concern.

NOTES

[1] MaryAnne Hogan and Lisa Rose, The Manual: A Tutorial Syllabus (Kentfield, CA: College of Marin, 1977).

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